

SUPPLEMENTS TO
VIGILIAE CHRISTIANAE



Gregory of Nyssa: *In Canticum Canticorum*

Analytical and Supporting Studies.

*Proceedings of the 13th International Colloquium
on Gregory of Nyssa (Rome, 17–20 September 2014)*



Edited by

GIULIO MASPERO, MIGUEL BRUGAROLAS
AND ILARIA VIGORELLI

BRILL

Gregory of Nyssa: *In Canticum Canticorum*

Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae

TEXTS AND STUDIES OF EARLY CHRISTIAN LIFE AND LANGUAGE

Editors-in-Chief

D.T. Runia
G. Rouwhorst

Editorial Board

J. den Boeft
B.D. Ehrman
K. Greschat
J. Lössl
J. van Oort
C. Scholten

VOLUME 150

The titles published in this series are listed at *brill.com/vcs*



In memoriam Lucas Francisco Mateo Seco

Gregory of Nyssa: *In Canticum Canticorum*

*Analytical and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the
13th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa
(Rome, 17–20 September 2014)*

Edited by

Giulio Maspero
Miguel Brugarolas
Ilaria Vigorelli



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at <http://catalog.loc.gov>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 0920-623X

ISBN 978-90-04-38144-5 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-38204-6 (e-book)

Copyright 2018 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.

Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Hes & De Graaf, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Rodopi, Brill Sense and Hotei Publishing.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Koninklijke Brill NV provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA. Fees are subject to change.

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

*Memoriae R.P. Lucae Francisci Mateo-Seco sacrum
servi boni et fidelis sacerdotis aeterni Iesu Christi
viri pii dediti studiis litterarum S.P.N. Gregorii Nysseni
hominis perboni et dulcissimi*



Contents

Preface XIII

List of Conference Participants XV

PART 1

Systematic Approach to the In Canticum

The In Canticum in Gregory's Theology: Introduction and Gliederung 3
Giulio Maspero

Struttura, funzione e genere letterario delle Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici 53
Claudio Moreschini

D'Origène à l'édition de 1615: sources et postérités des Homélies sur le Cantique de Grégoire de Nysse 77
Matthieu Cassin

Gregor von Nyssa in der Vorgeschichte des byzantinischen Bilderstreites 119
Reinhart Staats

Gregorio di Nissa interprete del Cantico dei Cantici 137
Manlio Simonetti (†)

The Exegesis of the Song of Songs: a New Type of Metaphysics 155
Theo Kobusch

Dew on the Locks of the Beloved: the In Canticum Canticorum on Faith and Knowledge 170
Martin Laird, O.S.A.

Spuren von Trinitätstheologie in den Hoheliedhomilien Gregors von Nyssa 180
Volker Henning Drecolll

**The Incarnate Logos: Gregory of Nyssa's *In Canticum Canticorum*
Christological Core** 200
Miguel Brugarolas

**From First Fruits to the Whole Lump: the Redemption of Human Nature in
Gregory's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*** 233
Johannes Zachhuber

**Theology of Baptism in the *In Canticum Canticorum* of Gregory of
Nyssa** 256
Everett Ferguson

**The Metaphor of the Mirror in Platonic Tradition and Gregory's *Homilies
on the Song of Songs*** 265
Lenka Karfíková

**The Rhetoric of Landscape in Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the Song of
Songs*** 288
Morwenna Ludlow

Apokatastasis and Epektasis in *Cant* and Origen 312
Ilaria Ramelli

**Becoming Men, Not Stones: *Epektasis* in Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the
Song of Songs*** 340
J. Warren Smith

**Gregory of Nyssa on Spiritual Ascent and Trinitarian Orthodoxy: a
Reconsideration of the Relation between Doctrine and Askesis** 360
Sarah Coakley

PART 2 ***Supporting Studies***

**Der Zugang mittels „Spuren und Funken“ zum Unzugänglichen und die
radikale Begrenztheit eines Analogieschlusses von der Oikonomia auf die
Theologia beim Hl. Gregor von Nyssa** 379
Theodoros Alexopoulos

“If You Do Not Know Yourself, Beautiful amongst Women ...”: Human Greatness in Gregory of Nyssa and Its Influence on the Quattrocento 390
Francisco Bastitta Harriet

“The Royal Bed”: Gregory of Nyssa’s Platonic Reading of the *Song of Songs* 403
Constantine Bozinis

The Metapoetics of Μεταποίησις 416
Scot Douglass

“Quel divino e puro amore dello sposo invisibile”: Gregorio di Nissa, la *Vita di Macrina* e le *Omellerie sul Cantico dei Cantici* 429
Roberta Franchi

Die Zunahme der Parrhesie in der Auslegung von *Hohelied* 5,7 durch Gregor von Nyssa 444
Piet Hein Hupsch

La tríada yegua – amiga – hija y la estructura de los libros III–IV del comentario nisenio al *Cantar* 454
Manuel Mira

The Divine Names and Their Use in Gregory of Nyssa’s *In Canticum Canticorum* 466
Georgios D. Panagopoulos

“The Bridegroom Descended to His Garden and the Garden Blossomed Again”: Images of the Incarnation in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs* by Gregory of Nyssa 485
Helena Panczová

The Multiform Wisdom of God, Apophasis and the Church in Gregory of Nyssa’s Reading of *Rom* 1.20 in *Cant* XIII 498
Johannes Aakjær Steenbuch

Mixture, Beauty, and the Incarnation in Gregory’s *In Canticum Canticorum* 508
Luke Steven

Gregory of Nyssa on Bodily and Spiritual Pleasure in *In Canticum Canticorum* 517

Siiri Toivainen

Ontology and Existence: *Schésis* of the Soul in Gregory of Nyssa's *In Canticum Canticorum* 527

Ilaria Vigorelli

Pursuing God: The Role of Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* 539

Martin C. Wenzel

Appendix: Reinhart Staats' Morning prayer 551

Index locorum 554

Index nominum 584

Preface

The XIII Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa took place on September 17th–20th, 2014 in Rome, at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. The first edition of this series of conferences was held in Chevetogne in 1969 and was promoted by Jean Daniélou and others. Typically these Colloquia have focused on the study of one of the works of Gregory. In this way, over the years and parallel to the emergence of *Gregorii Nissenii Opera*, they have yielded a corpus of studies on Gregory that is of great extension and of high scientific value. On this occasion, the Colloquium's objects of study were the fifteen Homilies of Gregory: *In Canticum Canticorum*.

We can highlight two of the reasons why these homilies were chosen. First, the three immediately preceding Colloquia had devoted particular attention to the dogmatic works, especially *Contra Eunomium* and the *Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology*, and none so far had been dedicated to the great spiritual writings of Gregory. This is why it seems appropriate to systematically address a work like *In Canticum* which is—as if in unison—a work of spiritual, exegetical, and theological doctrine, all together. Secondly, the wide spectrum of the themes which it contains prompted a great interest for this work, so that, after the publication of the critical edition (ed. Hermann Langerbeck, GNO VI, Leiden, 1960), it has been translated into the main modern languages: in German by Franz Dünzl (Freiburg, 1994), in Italian by Claudio Moreschini (Rome, 1988 and Milan, 2016), in French by Adelin Rousseau (Namur, 2008), more recently the posthumous English translation by Richard A. Norris Jr. (Atlanta, 2012), who died in 2005, and the recent French version by Michel Corbin (Paris, 2018). For this reason it has not been necessary to include a new translation of *In Canticum* in this volume.

The *plenary lectures* of the Colloquium are collected in the first part of these Proceedings. Fifteen studies, preceded by a theological introduction, analyze the main questions that recur in *In Canticum Canticorum*. The studies, rather than successively analyzing each one of the Homilies, follow a systematic order that emphasizes the *akolouthia* of Gregory's thought and the great unity of the xv Homilies *In Canticum Canticorum*. This systematic approach to *In Canticum* commences with studies of a historical, philological, and exegetical nature, in order to develop afterwards a coherent line of thought that starts from Trinitarian and Christological doctrine, continues with sacramental and spiritual theology, and ends with eschatology and mystical doctrine. The second part of the volume gathers fourteen short papers, which were presented in the Colloquium and which have been carefully selected among forty-five pro-

posals by a long process of peer review. These articles treat various questions and represent a valuable set of supporting studies.

Throughout its two parts the volume combines investigations carried out both by senior and junior scholars. This would not have been possible without the generous work done by the Advisory Board of the Colloquium and without the interest that they have conveyed to new generations in the studies of Gregory of Nyssa: Theodoros Alexopoulos, Constantine Bozinis, Alessandro Capone, Matthieu Cassin, Tina Dolidze, Volker Drecoll, Enrique Eguarte, Samuel Fernández, Lenka Karfiková, Martin Laird, Jeronimo Leal, Johan Lee-mans, Morwenna Ludlow, Anneliese Meis, Claudio Moreschini, Ekkehard Mühlenberg, Ilaria Ramelli, Rocco Ronzani, J. Warren Smith and Johannes Zachhuber.

In addition, our sincere gratitude is extended in these brief introductory words to the Abbot Michel Van Parys, of the Greek Abbey of Saint Nilus, in Grottaferrata, who honored us with his presence and chaired one special session of the conference. He and Reinhart Staats took part in the first Colloquium at Chevetogne and their participation in this edition has been a gift and a wonderful sign of continuity in the studies on Gregory of Nyssa.

A special thank you should also be addressed not only to those who enabled us to enjoy the theology of Gregory of Nyssa during the Colloquium, but also to those who made it come alive during morning prayers: John Panteleimon Manoussakis, Mark J. Hunt and again Reinhart Staats, whose homily, pronounced in the Chapel of the Sant'Agostino Church where the mortal remains of Augustine's mother Monica rest, is collected in an appendix. Additionally, these morning prayers were also an occasion to recall Elias Moutsoulas († 1st August 2014) and David Balás († 8 February 2014) who died in the months prior to the conference.

Last but not least, we want this volume to serve as a tribute *in memoriam* of Prof. Mateo-Seco, our *Doktorvater*, who also died in 2014, on the 15th of February. In his honor Hubertus R. Drobner composed the Latin verses which open the volume. Prof. Mateo-Seco actively participated in the preparation of the *Colloquium*: his advice was of great assistance to us and our memory of him will be a great encouragement to continue following the example that he set for us.

Giulio Maspero and Miguel Brugarolas
Roma—Pamplona, 28 March 2017

List of Conference Participants

Giovanni Manabu Akiyama, University of Tsukuba
Maria García Kanako Akiyama, University of Tsukuba
Theodoros Alexopoulos, Universität Bern
Charalampos Apostolopoulos, University of Ioannina
Eirini Artemi, National and Capodistrian University of Athens
Lewis Ayres, Durham University
Francisco Bastitta Harriet, Universidad de Buenos Aires
Markéta Bendová, Charles University in Prague
Magdalena Blahova, Charles University of Prague
Theoni Boura, Agii Anargiri
Constantine Bozinis, Aristoteles University of Thessaloniki
Miguel Brugarolas, Universidad de Navarra
Raphael A. Cadenhead, Corpus Christi College, University of Cambridge
Emily Cain, Fordham University
Matthieu Cassin, Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes CNRS, Paris
Mattia C. Chiriatti, Universitat de Barcelona
Sarah Coakley, University of Cambridge
Chiara Curzel, Trento
Maria Laura Di Paolo, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano
Scot Douglass, University of Colorado Boulder
Volker Drecoll, Tübingen University
Franck Dubois, O.P., Université Catholique de Lille
Jonathan Farrugia, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum
Everett Ferguson, Abilene Christian University
Roberta Franchi, University of Waterloo
Anđela Đ. Gavrilović, University of Belgrade
Giorgio Groppo, Sommariva Bosco
Mark J. Hunt, STD, Holy Family University, Philadelphia
Piet Hein Hupsch, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Russel Jefford, Oxfordshire
Lenka Karfíková, Charles University Prague
Theo Kobusch, Universität Bonn
Marcello La Matina, Università degli Studi di Macerata
Martin Laird, O.S.A., Villanova University
Johan Leemans, KU Leuven
Vito Limone, Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele, Milano
Morwenna Ludlow, University of Exeter

John Panteleimon Manoussakis, College of Holy Cross
Paola Marone, Università La Sapienza di Roma
Giulio Maspero, Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, Roma
Nino Melikishvili, National Center of Manuscripts, Tbilisi, Georgia
Manuel Mira, Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, Roma
Claudio Moreschini, Pisa
Ari Ojell, University of Helsinki
Tamar Otkhmezuri, National Center of Manuscripts, Tbilisi
Niko-Pekka Ovaskainen, National Center of Manuscripts, Tbilisi
Georgios D. Panagopoulos, University Ecclesiastical Academy of Iannina
Helena Panczová, Trnava University
Michael Petrin, University of Notre Dame
Noémie Piacentino, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris
Marta Przyszychowska, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw
Ilaria Ramelli, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano
Joona Salminen, University of Helsinki
Anna Silvas, University of New England
Manlio Simonetti
J. Warren Smith, Duke Divinity School, Durham
Tatyana Solomonik-Pankrashova, Vilnius University
Reinhart Staats, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel
Johannes Aakjaer Steenbuch, University of Copenhagen
Luke Steven, Cambridge University
Haikka Terttu, University of Tampere
Siiri Toiviainen, St. John's College, Durham University
Eduardo Torres, Universidad de Navarra
Ilaria Vigorelli, Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, Roma
Françoise Vinel, Université de Strasbourg
Augustinus Weber O.S.B., Kloster der hl. Gertrud Tettenweis
Matthias Weglage, Göttingen
Martin Wenzel, University of Göttingen
Robert Wozniak, Pontifical University of John Paul II, Kraków
Johannes Zachhuber, Trinity College, Oxford

PART 1

Systematic Approach to the In Canticum



The *In Canticum* in Gregory's Theology: Introduction and *Gliederung*

Giulio Maspero

1 Introduction

Introducing Gregory's *In Canticum* and framing the work from the standpoint of the elements bearing his theological architecture are no easy undertakings. This is not a merely rhetorical statement in that it contains the central thesis of the current work in a nutshell: the true difficulty of what is proposed here is the simple consequence of the very *intentio* of the author, who does not have the goal of a clean and scientific exegesis of the biblical poem, but rather leads the reader in a repeated exercise of interpretation that always points beyond itself. He, in fact, warns the reader from the beginning of his commentary:

Pay heed to me in this regard: it is best not to quibble about the construction of the text, but to follow the concatenation of thought.¹

Gregory's goal does not seem to be to achieve an intellectual structure, but rather to assume a disposition of real openness toward God. We will try to show how this corresponds precisely to the deepest theological nucleus of the thought of the Bishop of Nyssa, whose development is based on the radical transformation of ontology, produced by Christian revelation. This leads to the formulation of apophaticism as an essential epistemological condition of the theological act itself and culminates in identifying the *epektasis* with the definitive and paradigmatic form of the relationship between God and man. Gregory's conception not only defines eschatological perfection in terms of the progress of the soul, but presents the very goal of this path in the achievement of stability in the movement of union with God, as eternal immersion in intimacy with Him. The mystical dimension is thus understood in a continuous way with respect to eschatological glory in what is perhaps Gregory's most original conception.²

1 καί μοι τοῦτο παρασχέσθω ἡ ἀκοή, μὴ λίαν ἀκριβολογεῖσθαι πρὸς τὴν τῆς λέξεως σύνταξιν ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν εἰρμόν τοῦ νοήματος βλέπειν. *Cant* II (GNO VI 53,13–15).

2 A. Spira believes that this very doctrine was the source of inspiration for European mysticism, in contrast to Aristotle's horror for infinite progress and to his limited God (cf. A. Spira,

This has to do, immediately, with the issue of the audience of the work. Daniélou believed that it had been composed for the Christian ladies group that gathered at Constantinople, in the home of the noble widow Olympias.³ She was an important figure in the time of Theodosius, to whom the same Homilies are dedicated. These would therefore be a writing addressed to people of a higher spiritual level. Cahill, rather, showed that the homilies were spoken at Nyssa, the episcopal seat of Gregory, during one lent between the years 391 and 394 and that only at a later time were re-worked in order to be sent to Olympias, who had requested the composition.⁴ This detail is of great importance also on the theological level, because it shows the connection between sacramental and mystical conception in the thought of Gregory: to explain the *Song of Songs* he speaks to everyone about contemplation, because the revelation addresses to everyone the call to contemplation itself. This is no longer understood in the intellectualistic or spiritualistic sense, but is now accessible to each soul through participation in the sacramental dynamic.

This approach is in line with the reading in mystagogical terms of the *Song of Songs* that was common in the Fathers of the Church:⁵ precisely this book of the Old Testament, in fact, was especially connected to the Christian initiation, as a figure of the union of God with the soul and with all His people. Baptism was usually administered then at the Easter vigil and the Song was also read during Passover in the Jewish liturgy. This circumstance exercised a direct influence on the early Christian liturgy.⁶

A text that aspires to be an “introduction” to the work of Gregory that is at issue must, then, be measured simultaneously with two other introductory elements that, in turn, characterize the content: the conception of the perfection of the Christian as a continuous ontological “introduction” in God, based in its turn on the “introduction” to the sacramental life in which the Christian initiation consists.

“Le temps d’un homme selon Aristote et Grégoire de Nysse”, in: *Colloques internationaux du CNRS*, Paris 1984, 289).

3 For a very good discussion of the addressees of the homilies, see C. Moreschini, “Introduzione”, in V. Limone—C. Moreschini (eds.), *Origene. Gregorio di Nissa. Sul Cantico dei Cantici*, Milano 2016, 92–96.

4 Cf. J.B. Cahill, “The Date and Setting of Gregory of Nyssa’s *Commentary on the Song of Songs*”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 32 (1981) 450–452.

5 Cf. J. Daniélou, *Bible et liturgie*, Paris 1951, 259–280. See also A. Cortesi, *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa. Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale*, Roma 2000, 34–39.

6 Cf. Daniélou, *Bible et liturgie*, 261. On the role of the Song in (not just the baptismal) liturgy, see: A.M. Pelletier, *Lectures du Cantique des Cantiques: de l’énigme du sens aux figures du lecteur*, Rome 1989, 147–181.

The double *Sitz im Leben* is not so contradictory, either on the theological level or from the historical standpoint, if one considers the broader context of the second half of the fourth century. The desire to take the Christian life seriously and the perception of the call to holiness is manifested in these years, in fact, at the same time as departure from the world through the monastic life and as a reminder of the baptismal requirements addressed to each Christian *in saeculo*. The very biography of Gregory and the story of his family revolve around these two poles, which basically constitute a single goal.⁷

Starting from these premises, I have chosen to divide this introduction into two main parts. The first is analytic, and the second is of a synthetic nature. We will start, therefore, from the proposal of a *Gliederung* for the text. This, in absence of a new translation, may serve as a guide for going through the commentary of Gregory and grasping its dynamic. This movement is completely directed toward the *epektasis* as a fundamental hermeneutic principle not only of the *Song of Songs*, but of the whole of the Christian message. Starting from here, the second part will be dedicated to a synthetic presentation of the *concatenation* of his thought, rather than to the *construction of the text*, according to Gregory's own indication, through a series of his citations that appear particularly relevant in light of the whole of the work. This will allow for the conclusion by showing how the finding of the absence of a fixed structure of the work is in service of the apophatic epistemology to which the paradoxical logic of Gregory tries to lead.

2 Analysis

2.1 *Gliederung*

The proposal of a *Gliederung* for the *Commentary* is obviously accompanied by the awareness of the unavoidable hermeneutic dimension that is implicitly present in every attempt to identify different sections of a text. Each choice

7 Moreschini acutely captures Gregory's peculiarity: "Certainly, the Greek philosopher also has a school, frequented by his disciples, to whom, even before books, he commits his teaching; however, the conversation of the philosopher always requires an intellectualism, an esoteric environment that, despite the cordiality of the relationships between master and disciples (a cordiality that, for example, is attested to by Plotinus and his friends), is always characterized by abstractness. Gregory, rather, does not hesitate to offer the precious fruits of his spiritual speculation in his homilies, that is, through a literary genre that is secondary with respect to the treatises or polemical works, which he composed in previous years" (Moreschini, "Introduzione", 106).

already represents an interpretation in itself. At the same time one hopes, however, that, similarly to what occurs with the map of a city, this operation can be helpful in the exploration and study of Gregory's work.

From the standpoint of introduction to it, the *Gliederung* traced here would like to show almost visually the difficulty of any attempt to single out a structure and, at the same time, the apophatic spirit and the *epektatic* rhythm that distinguishes the commentary.⁸

Prologue

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 3,1–4,10 | <i>Incipit</i> : The call to present the philosophy of the <i>Song</i> through the spiritual interpretation proposed by Gregory. |
| 4,10–6,10 | An apology of the spiritual, rather than literal, exegesis based on the criteria of utility that is taught by Scripture itself, like in the <i>Proverbs</i> and in Paul. |
| 6,10–10,4 | Therefore the exegetical criterion is virtue, while there are literal interpretations that are harmful, according to what Paul says in 2 Cor 3,6 and, especially, according to the example of Christ Himself, who explains to the disciples the symbols and deepest meanings of His words. |
| 10,4–11,7 | The example of the Fig: the tree of life and the one from which eating was prohibited in Gn 2,16–17 must be a single tree, because the center of a circle is unique and the tree was the center of the Paradise. |
| 11,8–12,19 | Therefore, both the teaching of the prophets and of the psalms of the Old Testament and the words of Christ require spiritual interpretation. |
| 12,20–13,21 | <i>Excipit</i> : The motive and circumstances of a new work dedicated to the <i>Song</i> after that of Origen. |

Homily I (Ct 1,1–4)

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 14,13–16,14 | Introduction: the mystical interpretation of the <i>Song</i> addressed to the baptized, who should have the disposition (<i>diathesis</i>) of always traveling toward the perfection of love, therefore, freely and not out of fear. |
|-------------|--|

⁸ The numeration of the text is that of GNO VI.

- 16,14–18,10 Solomon and his writings find their full meaning in Christ, because *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Song* constitute an ascending sequence that is analogous to bodily growth.
- 18,10–22,10 *Proverbs* corresponds to children: the *Wisdom* describes the Beauty in order to excite the desire of the youth, enhancing it and averting it from the material dimension. God is presented as the Spouse to evoke the disposition of the soul of the listeners through the hope of being loved in return, to the point of creating an inclination toward a more perfect life.
- 22,10–25,1 In *Ecclesiastes* the men and women are led to a purification and are diverted by the apparent realities, while the *Song* introduces them in the divine mysteries, preparing them for the marriage of the soul with God. This is why the soul is now represented as the bride, which shows first the desire of the Bridegroom and is encouraged more and more to follow that desire.
- 25,2–27,15 The passage from *Proverbs* to *Song* implies an ascent to Paradise through the impassibility by becoming, through the sacraments, similar to God in purity. The purification that must precede the ascent of the spiritual mountain finds its fulfillment with the entry into the holy of holies, constituted by the *Song of Songs*, whose name is a superlative linked to the mystery of mysteries. In this way, the Holy Spirit transforms man's passion into impassibility.
- 27,16–32,8 The beginning of the spiritual interpretation of *Song*: the meaning of the title with reference to Solomon aims to push the reader to look at the greatness of the whole, like in the painting of a king's portrait. Those who enter into the inner chambers of the mystery are no longer men or women, but tend toward a divine condition, similar to that peace of the passions and that harmonious unity of spirit and flesh that characterizes the resurrection. This movement constitutes a constant growth in desire that in *epektasis* never has a term.
- 32,8–33,21 Example: the spiritual interpretation of kisses consists in thinking that the mouth of the Spouse is a source of eternal life and that therefore it is from Him that one has to drink, mouth to mouth. Thus, God desires that everyone receive this kiss. Analogously, the breasts refer to the heart, that is, to the works of God in favor of human beings.
- 34,1–36,11 The foundation of the possibility of spiritual exegesis are the spiritual senses, which the soul has in analogy with those of the

body. Just as the lips touch in the kiss, it is possible for the soul to touch the *Logos*. The same goes for the perfume and wine that flows from the breasts. The deepest meaning of the images of Song is that divine nutrition is superior to every philosophy and human reasoning, just like God, who is perfect virtue, is superior to all human virtues.

- 36,12–38,2 Apophatic epistemology: the highest philosophy of the *Song* points to the fact that the power and nature of God are inaccessible to human reason. Everything that we can surmise is like the odor that we can perceive in vases that contained perfume.
- 38,2–40,12 The foundation of the disposition of love is the overflow of divine beauty, which attracts the young, who are no longer children or elderly, but are at the nuptial age. Thus they devote themselves to the loving dialogue with the divine Spouse, which through prayer is prolonged in the infinite movement of the *epektasis*.
- 40,13–42,9 Conclusion: we know all of this thanks to the economy of the Church, because whoever has received the joy has communicated it through the tradition, in such a way that this joy can be everyone's. The model is John, whose mediation also makes possible for each of the readers to be purified and to turn to the rectitude that God Himself is.

Homily II (Ct 1,5–8)

- 43,8–45,15 Introduction: this means entering into the tabernacle of the knowledge of God, passing from the visible to the invisible, through purification and liturgy.
- 45,16–47,1 The exegesis of “dark but lovely”: the bride is made beautiful anew by the Bridegroom after becoming dark.
- 47,1–50,4 Exhortation to the imitation addressed to young girls: this return to beauty is possible for everyone, as Paul also teaches.
- 50,5–53,9 Clarification on protology: evil, that is, being unclean and dark, is caused by sin; it is not at the beginning, but arises from freedom.
- 53,10–57,16 The exegesis of the “sons of my mother”: these are demons, the creatures responsible for temptation.
- 57,16–59,11 The two vineyards, Jerusalem or Sodom / Gomorrah: with freedom, one chooses which of the two is to be cultivated.
- 59,12–60,22 We must cherish the true vineyard that is the life of God in us.

- 61,1–63,8 The bride speaks to the Bridegroom: the relation of love is possible in the sacraments.
- 63,9–65,12 The friends of the Bridegroom: the exhortation to “know yourself” addressed to the bride.
- 65,13–67,7 The critique of the negative custom.
- 67,8–69,20 Conclusion: the bride reaches identification with the nature of the Bridegroom because God dwells within her.

Homily III (Ct 1.9–13)

- 70,14–73,1 Introduction: the third purification is fulfilled directly by the voice of the Bridegroom.
- 73,2–78,4 The exegesis of “the steed”: thanks to baptism, the soul becomes like the angels, the power of God who defeated the Egyptians.
- 78,5–79,8 The exegesis of “the tortoise”: this figure indicates the purity and virginal life that leads the purification.
- 79,9–82,16 The exegesis of the comparison between the neck and necklaces: this pure life implies all the virtues.
- 82,17–85,9 The gifts, similar to gold and silver, of the friends of the Bridegroom indicate the transcendence of the divine nature with respect to participation.
- 85,10–88,6 In fact, divine nature is beyond all understanding: only the dwelling of God Himself within the soul can make it known.
- 88,7–93,9 This knowledge is compared to the perfume of the spikenard and is therefore drawn from lived virtues, which are in relation to the true Virtue that is the divine nature.
- 93,10–95,3 The exegesis of the purse of myrrh on the breast, that indicates the transformation of the heart of the bride, which is now entirely perfumed.
- 95,4–99,2 Conclusion: spiritual progress leads to identification with Christ.

Homily IV (Ct 1.15–2.7)

- 100,5–101,17 Introduction: the gold is purified more times with successive castings, so the mare now becomes bride and virgin.
- 101,17–104,15 In fact, one becomes what one wants, and has to choose whether to look to vice or to virtue, which are polar opposites: the soul is like a mirror.
- 104,15–107,8 The exegesis of “you are altogether beautiful, my love”: the image

that is observed is physically impressed in the pupils, so the eyes of the bride are doves because she is joined to the Spirit, whose symbol is precisely the dove. So she can see the Bridegroom, who is Beauty itself.

- 107,9–109,1 The exegesis of the “verdant couch”: the nuptial bed means the incarnation that makes knowledge of the unknowable God possible precisely in the veil of the flesh, to which one can turn in order to contemplate it.
- 109,1–112,21 Christ is also the builder of the house, whose roof consists of beams of virtue, like Lebanese cedar and perfumed cypress.
- 113,1–115,1 The exegesis of the “lily of the valley”: the Bridegroom reads in the gaze of the bride the consensual desire and accepts that the soul becomes the lily.
- 115,1–117,18 After dove and friend, the soul becomes the sister in the adoption to God the Father, remaining always distinct but sacramentally joined, as indicates the call to the Eucharist.
- 117,19–119,11 The exegesis of the “apple”: it is the Lord whose refreshment we must desire and the very reason of our desire.
- 119,12–121,5 The exegesis of the “banquet hall”: the ever-growing desire for *epektasis* leads to the Eucharist and to the Cross, so in the mystery of the wine the soul wants to be submissive to love.
- 121,6–123,11 Love for God and love for human beings: the order in relations.
- 123,12–127,6 The perfumes and the apples are reminiscent of the incarnation, because of the flesh and blood: the bride can find strength only by watching the humility of Christ.
- 127,7–129,19 The archer is love: the Trinitarian arrow penetrates into the heart and the wound becomes a reason for pride because it joins to God Himself, who thus dwells within the soul pouring into her the life through the wound and hurling her upwards.
- 129,20–135,14 Conclusion: the bride therefore swears to urge young women to always look for the growth of love, which consists in the *isoangelia*, that is, in being always turned toward God as are the angels, in the eternal movement of *epektasis*.

Homily V (Ct 2.8–17)

- 137,4–140,1 Introduction: the bride lives the paradox of feeling pain and desire together, because she is pulled into the *epektasis*.
- 140,2–143,16 The exegesis of “here he comes”: it means the incarnation, like in the image of the gazelle and the fawn, which conquers moun-

- tains and hills which are symbolic of the demons. This is why Bethel means "house of God".
- 143,17–149,4 The passage from the preparation of the Old Testament to the fulfillment of the New: the windows are the prophets and the incarnation is expressed in terms of light, which now enters directly into the house without interposed walls.
- 149,4–151,2 The re-formulation of the *epektasis* in these terms: one becomes light watching light, that is, addressing one's gaze to the Good and taking on a stable disposition to God, who is Beauty.
- 151,3–154,14 So there is the passage from the winter to the spring, with the liberation from evil and the blossoming of the flowers that are the virtues.
- 154,14–157,4 The pruning represents the purification that is done with confession, until the sober intoxication given by the Eucharist.
- 157,5–160,10 The foundation of the *epektasis*: the ontology of infinite good. The ideal movement is from apophatism to a morality of the infinite.
- 160,10–164,15 Here perfection is obtained by following one's desire which is fulfilled only in the incarnation that allows one to see God face to face.
- 164,16–168,5 The exegesis of "the little foxes": the demonological interpretation and the role of the angels.
- 168,6–171,7 Conclusion: finally the union of the bride with Christ the Bridegroom is reached.

Homily VI (Ct 3,1–8)

- 172,20–174,20 Ontological introduction: a Porphyrian tree with material-immaterial and created-uncreated distinctions. The anthropological foundation of the *epektasis* is the infinitude of man.
- 175,1–179,19 Summary of the stages presented in the first five homilies, centered on the verdant couch as a symbol of the incarnation.
- 179,20–183,15 The connection to the image of the night that refers to apophatism. This also concerns the angels, in such a way that God is known only through faith.
- 183,16–189,1. The amazement of the friends of the Bridegroom, that is, of the angels, for the bride.
- 189,16–199,7 The exegesis relating to the nuptial bed:
 – the sixty warriors as a symbol of the nature of God, who is identified with Beauty and who inspires awe (189,16–192,12);

- sixty as the number that indicates progress (192,13–195,13);
- five senses that indicate the whole person (195,14–197,13);
- conclusion: the children and warriors all recall the entire church (197,13–199,7).

Homily VII (Ct 3:9–4:7)

- 201,4–205,20 Introduction: typological interpretation of Solomon from his historical reality pointing to Christ, in the same way as how the Queen of Sheba means the Church.
- 206,1–207,13 Purpose of the exegesis: if Solomon refers to Christ, his litter represents His economy in our favor.
- 207,14–211,18 The exegesis of the litter in relation to the dwelling of God within the soul, based on freedom. Thus, the litter also symbolizes the Church and the virtues of those who live in it.
- 211,19–216,2 The bride turns to the young women, inviting them to come out and participate in her love, thus imitating what Love itself has done with her.
- 216,3–242,13 Praise to the Church in its members:
- the eyes and purity, through which it is conformed to the Holy Spirit (216,3–219,19);
 - the hair and modesty that lead to death with respect to the world (219,20–223,9);
 - the teeth as ministers who will express the teachings in the Church (223,10–228,3);
 - the red lips are the agreement and the profession of faith fulfilled in the blood of Christ, therefore, faith that operates through love (228,4–229,20);
 - the redness of the cheeks and the modesty of the spouse with the impassibility of the soul (229,21–231,4);
 - the neck and necklaces as zeal in action after having received the Spirit (231,5–238,12);
 - the breasts likened to fawns, like the heart in which dwells the Spirit analogously to the sun (238,13–242,13).
- 242,14–244,2 Conclusion: the whole body is involved in the mystery of the Passion of Christ through which one has life, rather than with the forces of man.

Homily VIII (Ct 4.8–9)

- 245,11–247,18 Introduction: Paul and the *epektasis*.
 247,19–250,7 Thirst and water are symbols of the sacraments, where the incense and myrrh point toward the mystery of Christ. So the *epektasis* is achieved through the sacraments.
 250,8–253,8 God reminds us where we come from in order to protect us from turning back to the bad movement. Perfection is, rather, changelessness in the movement toward good, in a continuous growth.
 253,8–257,5 *Isoangelia* and *apatheia*: even the angels know the Trinity only in the bride, that is, through the Body of Christ.
 257,5–261,4 Conclusion: the way is to have a unique disposition toward good, becoming internally united like the angels, in order to contemplate only the mystery and beauty of the Church.

Homily IX (Ct 4.10–15)

- 262,1–22 Introduction: we need to listen by being dead to the flesh, transformed into a spiritual nature.
 263,1–266,3 The bond of marriage implies reciprocity, a mutual disposition: the Bridegroom praises the breasts of the bride, which no longer give milk but wine.
 266,4–268,15 The perfume of the bride is life, not sacrifice as in the Old Testament.
 268,16–271,6 The exegesis of the bee in Pr 6.8: just as the industrious bee goes from flower to flower, so the many charisms allow the soul to speak to everyone.
 271,7–272,21 The life according to virtue has, therefore, many children, like the dress of the bride.
 272,22–275,7 Like the garden full of flowers and well-defended.
 275,8–277,11 The exegesis of “sealed fountain”: it is the soul that holds the thought in impassivity, coming to life.
 277,12–281,4 Summary of previous exegeses.
 281,5–283,17 The exegesis of “the pomegranates”: they are hard on the outside and protected.
 283,18–285,16 Double exegesis of “the crocus”: it is both virtue in the philosophical key and faith from the Trinitarian perspective, but the two interpretations coincide because God is virtue itself.
 285,17–288,3 The exegesis of “the calamus and cinnamon”: their properties indicate the virtues that the angels also have.

- 288,3–289,15 A methodological interlude: Holy Scripture can use mythological forms to illustrate its purpose.
- 289,16–292,7 The exegesis of “the incense”: this concerns the participation in death through the *epektasis*.
- 292,7–294,2 Conclusion: like the Samaritan woman, the bride is the well of living water, which runs deeply to God.

Homily X (Ct 4.16–5.2)

- 294,14–296,15 Introduction: the amazement of all because the divine thoughts are like distant stars, to which we can ascend only with the Holy Spirit, similar to Elijah.
- 296,16–298,21 The amazement of Christ before the centurion in Mt 8.10: tendency toward the good that excludes evil, because where there is virtue there is no vice, just like where there is light there is no darkness.
- 298,22–303,2 The exegesis of the “north wind and south wind”: the first represents evil, the second good, while the perfumes of the garden are the symbol of Paul and the evangelists.
- 303,3–308,4 Epiclesis: the prayer to descend over the Eucharist has already been answered, in such a way that the bread and wine allow for a life according to virtue.
- 308,5–311,7 Liturgical exegesis of Ct 5.1: the symbols indicate the sacraments and the Christian initiation, which allow for the intoxication that characterized the lives of David, Peter, and Paul.
- 311,8–314,10 Oxymoronic conclusion: this means to sleep and keep watch at the same time, because the heart is turned toward God while the passions are dormant, choosing the pleasure of impassibility and abandoning that of the passions.

Homily XI (Ct 5.2–3)

- 315,15–319,5 Introduction: one must awaken from the sleep of false images that are misleading like waves to become, through regeneration, virginal like the angels.
- 319,5–322,12 The shadows as sources: metaphor of the source to indicate apophatism and connection with the three degrees of the ascent of Moses.
- 322,12–327,7 Synthesis of the degrees of knowledge of God: a) the dark spouse; b) beauty as the doves and the horses; c) the divine night

- wrapped in the shadow of the veil and of the cloud, thanks to which the bride is turned good through contact with the invisible nature of God; d) the divine names; e) the will and identification with nature; f) drops of the night are the dew of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles, that is, the Church.
- 327,8–329,14 Tunics of leather: one must be clothed in Jesus and can no longer carry the old tunic.
- 329,15–332,9 One needs to take off one's sandals, like Moses, through baptism.
- 332,10–337,21 The exegesis of "the hand" refers to creation, amazement, and apophatism before the work of God.
- 338,1–339,4 The exegesis of "the hand" refers to the incarnation: the house of the bride is our human life in its whole, marked by true wonder, like in the virginity of Mary.
- 339,5–340,3 Conclusion: one may choose the preferred interpretation, in the first case it will get as a result more humility in the cognitive act, and in the second, more faith in the mystical doctrines already proclaimed in the Old Testament.

Homily XII (Ct 5,5–7)

- 340,17–342,8 Rhetorical *incipit*: the departure for a voyage by sea requires prayer for fair wind, so it must be done in the sea of the exegesis, where the ship is the Church and the wind is the Holy Spirit.
- 342,9–347,5 The passage through voluntary mortification is necessary, because there are two elements that pull in opposite directions. The free will gives the victory, and the hand is the symbol of the works of the soul, and the fingers are the virtues.
- 347,6–352,5 The answer to the question about the necessity of death: in the beginning it was not necessary, because man was created perfect in beauty and lived in paradise. The exegesis of the two trees in paradise: they are the same in the center, therefore, there is only the tree of life and death is its privation. We must die to the dead life to be born to true life.
- 352,6–354,11 *Epektasis*: God is only known by always seeking him, by always remaining open and working with faith.
- 354,11–357,2 The example of Moses: in his ascension God passes over, and the patriarch can see Him only from behind, so the soul that found God should constantly follow Him because He always leads beyond.
- 357,3–359,4 Ontological explanation: it is so because the divine nature is

always beyond, always exceeding, and it cannot be understood on the categorical level. Thus, the soul multiplies the names, on the example of David, but never enough.

- 359,5–362,17 The exegesis of “the veil”: the bride who had removed her tunic now loses the veil in the successive purifications that characterize the ascent. The sacramental dimension expressed through the exegesis of the baton in Ps 22.
- 362,18–366,9 The guards of the city which protect the bride are the spirit ministers, because the wounds are beautiful as they come from the Holy Spirit, still according to the exegesis of Ps 22.
- 366,10–368,6 The parallelism between the soul and Paul as regards the *epektasis*.
- 368,7–369,13 The parallelism between the bride and the vision of Isaiah.
- 369,14–370,13 *Explicit*: another possible interpretation is that the loss of the veil indicates that love is unveiled and encouraging.

Homily XIII (Ct 5,8–12)

- 371,11–374,19 Introduction: the vow according to the gospel is the acceptance of God’s will.
- 375,1–377,12 Theological interpretation: the vow of the bride is the very claiming about God, what God really is, and so remaining free from passions.
- 377,13–378,21 Therefore, it is possible to see the Spouse only in the wound of Love, which has loved us up to death, that is, in the faith moved by love.
- 379,1–380,6 The young women ask the bride to know her Beloved.
- 380,7–383,14 The ontology of Christ: He, according to the prologue of John, has a created part and an uncreated part, therefore His flesh is partially comprehensible, in such a way that through it, one can reach the incomprehensible nature. The Mystery of mercy is the only way to God, i.e. through the Eucharist and the Body of the Church. Therefore, whoever sees the Church sees Christ, and whoever sees Christ arrives at God. This implies a positive reinterpretation of desire as a gift of God.
- 383,15–386,17 Cosmos-ecclesiological interpretation: the bride guides the young women to theophany in the flesh because there is no other path than the economy. The creation of the world is the constitution of the Church, which is the new land where the saints are the stars. Therefore, just as looking at the cosmos one

- can go back to originary Beauty, looking at the Church one can go back to Christ and to God.
- 386,18–390,8 The Christological exegesis of “radiant and ruddy”: they indicate the human nature of Christ, in that ruddy is His blood and radiant indicates the virginity of Mary, thanks to the conception by the Holy Spirit. The Eve-Mary parallel: the first conceives in pain and introduces sin, the second conceives in grace and introduces life, in such a way that Christ is unique, but in baptism we are all born in Him without passion.
- 390,9–393,11 The exegesis of “head of pure gold”: is Christ in His humanity, while the locks and precious stones are the prophets and the apostles who were previously “dark”.
- 393,12–397,3 Eyes must be united with the hands: Contemplation is not enough without works, and vice versa. The eyes must be washed in the abundant waters of truth, in such a way that they become as pure as doves and like milk that does not reflect false images.
- 397,4–399,3 Conclusion: moral synthesis.

Homily XIV (Ct 5.13–16)

- 399,15–401,9 Introduction: after the eyes purified like doves and milk, the jaws that nourish the small are contemplated.
- 401,10–406,6 The Church prepares the nutrition through people like Paul who is the “vial”, that is, simple, having become of the same nature as the perfume. They are the ones who speak and bring baptism to other.
- 406,7–411,14 The hands, that is, those that are hands in the Church, therefore, must be prepared to purify themselves like the head that is Christ. Fidelity is the imitation of the Lord, who creates by His very nature. The metaphor of the emerald, a precious stone cut by the jeweler.
- 411,15–415,12 The stomach represents the heart that is the true table where the Holy Spirit writes the Law, that is, that imprints on the memory of the word of God.
- 415,13–419,18 Ecclesial architecture: the legs that are columns correspond to men like Peter, James, and John, who are resting on the foundation that is Christ. His words indicate the columns of truth in the dual commandment of Mt 22.37–39.
- 419,19–424,19 The exegesis of “Lebanon”: Scripture uses the term both in a positive and a negative meaning. One corresponds to the lordship

of God with His angels and the other to that of the devil with his wicked angels. This points to the choice of the true Lebanon to be the Church, that is, member of Christ, which is the child who has power over the serpents in Is 9:5.

424,20–426,8 The mouth is the voice of the prophets, like Paul.

426,9–429,15 Conclusion: the parable of the Good Samaritan is the synthesis of the entire salvific economy, because he is Christ, the mount is His body, the two dinars are the dual commandment, and his love becomes the inn for us.

Homily xv (Ct 6.1–9)

431,1–435,18 Proem: Phillip says to Nathanael “come and see”, continuing the chain that unites the Baptist to Andrew, and the latter to Peter, so the young women call to the Bride to see Christ and she answers in the same way, telling them to turn to Him and indicating the direction where He is.

436,1–439,2 The soteriological exegesis of “my lover has come down to his garden”: the Logos descends in the life of man in imitation of the Good Samaritan, in such a way that the divine nature becomes the dwelling for the soul. The place where Christ can be found is, therefore, the virtuous soul.

439,3–442,9 The exegesis of “my lover belongs to me and I to him” and *mimesis*: the bride is rendered similar to Christ, like a mirror endowed with free will who voluntarily decides to reflect the divine Image. She then becomes like a crystal bowl full of lilies of virtue that render her resplendent with the very light of divine beauty.

442,10–445,3 Now the Bridegroom praises the beauty of the bride, showing the connection between *mimesis* and *epektasis*, like what happened in the life of Paul. In fact, the bride who freely welcomes the Bridegroom in herself shines of His light, like the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of those who are free.

445,4–446,10 Thus the bride lives the *isoangelia* and inspires awe.

446,11–450,3 The exegesis of “the wings of the soul”: the eyes of God have restored the wings to the bride, because at the beginning the human nature had wings, insofar as it is the image and likeness of God. The divine nature, in fact, is winged, in the sense that it possesses beatitude and incorruptibility. The gaze of love of God, who has Good in Himself, restores it to the Bride, making her a dove.

- 450,4–454,5 It resumes the description of the beauty of the spouse: the hair indicates the distance from the passions on the model of Elijah, similar to how the trades are transmitted by imitation.
- 454,5–456,15 The teeth and the scarlet ribbon placed over the mouth, which indicate the passion of Christ are, connected to the comparison with the pomegranate, which has good hidden within it under a thick skin.
- 456,16–461,6 The exegesis of the young women, the concubines, the queens, and the dove: the return to perfection is gradual and occurs in time, in such a way that the various souls are found in various states. The young women are those who are just beginning the path and are then associated with irrationality.
- 461,7–462,16 Among those who are already adults, rather, two types are distinguished: the concubines who follow Christ for fear of punishment and the queens who follow out of love.
- 462,16–466,4 The number sixty of the queens indicates the six commandments in Mt 25.35–36 lived in fullness in the multiplication by ten, which is reminiscent of the evangelical talents. In this way the queen is a nation of queens. Eighty also indicates fullness in relation to Ps 61, called “the octave” and refers to the fear of God.
- 466,5–469,9 Conclusion: the movements that come from fear and from love converge because the second casts out the first, in such a way that the two groups reach unity in the one dove, becoming co-natural with the one Good. This is carried out thanks to the Holy Spirit, who is the personal link of unity between the divine Persons and is glory itself. This is read in the light of Jn 17: Christ receives in His human nature that glory that he always possessed as Son and communicates it to those who are co-natural to Him. This allows for the passing from young women, to concubines, to queen to the point of being perfect dove, that is, growing in the desire and in the rush toward God until the unity of the divine nature is fulfilled among human beings.

2.2 *Interpretation*

A synthetic table that shows the presence, or not, of some fundamental themes in the different homilies may be useful to show the convergence of the theological introduction here proposed and the line of reasoning that emerges from the *Gliederung*. Corresponding letters were chosen for the following topics: Angels (A); Church (C); *Epektasis* (E); Indwelling (I); Morality (M); Ontology (O); Sacraments (S); Christology (X). This is the result:

	A	C	E	I	M	O	S	X
I		*	*		*	*	*	
II	*			*		*	*	
III				*	*	*	*	*
IV	*		*		*	*	*	*
V	*		*		*	*	*	*
VI		*	*			*		*
VII		*		*	*			*
VIII	*		*		*	*	*	*
IX	*		*		*	*		
X					*	*	*	
XI	*					*	*	*
XII	*		*		*	*	*	
XIII		*			*	*	*	*
XIV	*	*			*		*	*
XV	*	*	*	*	*	*		*

The exegetical theme, which is present from the prologue and goes through the entire work, is obviously left out. The same ubiquitous distribution characterizes all of the other selected contextual selections, which appear, however, to be treated in detailed and explicit ways in some homilies more so than in others. Regarding the ontological dimension, for example, the presence of the theme is highlighted in the table only when the text offers a true and proper analysis of the metaphysical structure of Christ, of the human being, of the angel, or of the world, and not simply a reference to terminology that is linked to *physis*. The explicit treatments of apophatism and the epistemological justifications of its role are also considered in this thematic area, insofar as they are intimately connected to the metaphysical conception of Gregory.

The ontological approach is indeed present in the prologue itself where the bishop of Nyssa puts forth, as a paradigmatic example of his interpretation, the exegesis of Gn 2.16–17, which is characterized by the connecting of the tree of life to that of the knowledge of good and of evil. In fact, life and the good are identified, while evil is defined as the mere absence of being. The convergence with neo-Platonic metaphysics cannot make us forget here the radical difference of the ontological architecture of Gregory, who is putting into a relation of real participation the baptized man with the infinite triune God.

This novelty is immediately evident in *Homily I*, which could be defined as programmatic, because from the introduction (14,13–16,14) it presents the fundamental *diathesis* of the Christian as the free choice of always hurling himself or herself toward the perfection of love. This is possible because God evokes the desire of man in order to attract him to the virtue that is now identified with the Creator Himself. In this passage it is immediately evident the absolute novelty of Gregory's proposal with respect to Greek metaphysics, as revealed by the apophatic epistemology (36,12–38,2). In the same way, the mystagogical element immediately enters into play here. It sacramentally connects the *Song of Songs* to the mystery of mysteries and, therefore, to the entrance into the holy of holies. Thus, from the very start, Gregory indicates both the hermeneutical key of its exegesis (that is, the *epektasis*) and the goal of his commentary, that is, the economy of the Church and the encouragement to communicate the mysteries received.

The redoubling that characterizes the exegetical methodology of Gregory is also immediately evident: the Cappadocian constantly tries to undermine any possibility of a univocal interpretation of the metaphors in the *Song*, indicating a dual possibility of exegesis, as occurs with the *bride* who according to Scripture can mean both God (18,10–22,10) and the soul (22,10–25,1).

In *Homily II* the pace of progress in purification is kept within the ontological reading, with the clarification of the origin of evil being connected exegetically to the spouse being "dark". However, everyone can turn to being good through the sacraments. Here the attention is shifted from the Church and the *epektasis* to the angels, in this case fallen angels (53,10–57,16), and the indwelling (67,8–69,20). Gregory somehow broadens the metaphysical horizon.

Thus, in *Homily III* the ontological-sacramental theme is maintained, along with that of the indwelling, now connected to apophatism. The new purification reveals, however, the moral and Christological dimension of the path taken. The latter in particular is the theological center of *Homily IV*, in which apophatism is connected to the incarnation (107,9–109,1) in what is one of the fundamental argumentative joints of the entire commentary. Thus, through desire the *epektasis* is reintroduced and interpreted both in the Eucharistic perspective and in reference to the *isoangelia*. *Homily V* closes off the Christological-sacramental path, presenting the apparently final union of the Bridegroom and the bride in terms of a morality based on the ontology of unlimited good and, therefore, as a morality of the infinite (157,5–160,10), which is fulfilled in the *epektasis* itself with the sober intoxication given by the Eucharist.

This concludes a path that starting from the *epektasis* reinterprets the soul's spiritual progress in the sacramental sense. The hypothesis seems confirmed

by the ontological analysis and by the synthesis of the first five homilies at the beginning of *Homily* VI. In this latter homily the fundamental themes that characterize the previous homilies are present: especially the *epektasis* itself, the ontological novelty connected to apophatism, and the centrality of Christ as the only way to God. However, the exegesis relating to the nuptial bed now introduces the ecclesiological dimension that characterizes the rest of the commentary in a more explicit way.

In *Homily* VII the interpretation of the figure of Solomon and of his litter joins the description of the Church and that of Christ in a moral perspective based on the indwelling of the Spirit within the soul which freely welcomes Him. Therefore, in *Homily* VIII the ecclesial theme and that of indwelling make way for that of the *epektasis* and the *isoangelia*, in a reinterpretation of the figure of Paul starting from the moral Christology so elaborated. The statement that even the angels know the one and triune God only through the Body of Christ is an essential hinge from the standpoint of theological epistemology.

Homily IX applies the interpretation proposed by Paul to the soul, explaining the reciprocity of the relation between the Bridegroom and the bride (263,1–266,1). The sacramental theme is substituted by a further exegetical redoubling, which is fundamental from an epistemological standpoint: the *crocus* is interpreted both from a philosophical perspective as symbol of virtue, and theologically as referring to the Trinitarian faith (283,18–285,16). Therefore, the reference to incense, full of liturgical resonance, opens the way to what could be defined as a further point of arrival in *Homily* X, where the moral and ontological discourse is presented through its sacramental realization in Christian initiation. This discloses to the Christian the same perfection fulfilled in the course of time in the concrete figures such as David, the evangelists, Peter, and Paul.

If one wanted to find a further unity in a scan of the structure of Gregory's commentary after the first five homilies, one could, therefore, consider Homilies VI–X as a unit that presents an illustration, on the level of the individual soul, of the achievement of the Church's goal through the liturgy: the *epiklesis* discloses the *epektasis* to all, uniting the baptized to great saints, the protagonists of the history of salvation.

This hypothesis concerning the structure can be confirmed by the beginning of *Homily* XI, which goes from the connection between apophatism and the levels of the Mosaic ascent, re-proposing a synthesis of the exegetical fulfillment in the preceding homilies. The perspective in this last part becomes more historical-salvific, because Gregory, starting from the awe at the virginity of Mary, connects the life of Christ with the whole of the life of man. This is achieved through a further exegetical redoubling in which the *hand* refers

both to creation and to incarnation, which, as already for the crocus, discloses a human perspective linked to the value of humility and one precisely of faith, relative to the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and, therefore, to the unity of the history of salvation.

In *Homily XII* the moral exegesis shows all its ontological depth by turning to the identification of the two trees in paradise (347,6–352,5), which already appeared in the prologue, and by reintroducing the perspective of the *epektasis*. The theme of the angels also reappears along with it. On the other hand, the sacramental exegesis develops on the interpretation of Ps 22. Finally, there is an umpteenth redoubling with respect to the *veil*, which can symbolize both the successive purifications (359,5–362,17) intrinsic to the unlimited progression of the soul, and the development of love (369,14–370,13). The latter possibility comes very suddenly at the end of a coherently structured sermon, so that the effect of surprise thus achieved cannot fail to make one think about a somewhat ironic attempt on the part of Gregory to relativize his own proposal.

Homily XIII shows the relation between the previous sacramental dynamic and the identity of the Church as a new creation. This concerns one of the most dense theological cores of the entire commentary, where the Church is presented in light of the ontology of Christ who, as true man and true God, is the only way to ascend to the Trinity. In an already historical-salvific perspective, also based on the classic Eve-Mary parallel, the hypostatic union is indicated as the only bridge toward the perfection to which the Church leads. The path is, therefore, from the Church to Christ and from Christ to God (383,15–386,17). This is why, at the moral level, contemplation and works must be united, according to a very different view from that of classical Greek ethics.

The historical-salvific perspective seems to be the point of arrival of the final synthesis that closes *Homily XIV*, in which the description of the ecclesial architecture is illustrated through the figures of Paul, Peter, James, and John, and is framed in the dramatic conflict between faithful and fallen angels. The last two groups correspond to a further exegetical redoubling that is connected to the interpretation of *Lebanon*. Finally, the Christological interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan that closes the homily (426,9–429,15) seems to immediately prepare for the finale of the commentary, identifying Jesus with the protagonist of the gospel recount. This narrative is, thus, erected as a symbol of the entire history of salvation and, therefore, as a more authentic meaning of the proposed spiritual exegesis.

The path is closed with *Homily xv* in which practically all the highlighted thematic areas are explicitly present, except the sacramental one, which however is implicit through the symbolic and mystagogical interpretation that characterized the exegesis of Gregory in the previous homilies. Highlighted

here is how the hermeneutic key of the *epektasis* indicates in the dynamic itself the principal basis of Christian perfection. The purpose of the sacred text is to set the Christian into motion, like the first apostles, so that each soul freely assumes the disposition of the angels, always turned toward God. The strength of the Christological element now presents this “being turned” toward the Creator as mimesis of Christ, which is carried out as mutual immanence. Thanks to it the soul shines with the divine Light that dwells within her, giving to her God’s virtues. In this way the soul herself regains her wings, a formula that in Platonic language entails the likeness to God. However, in the Cappadocian this is presented paradoxically through the corporeal dimension and in a constant progression that, precisely because it seeks perfection, is bound never to cease. Gregory’s exegesis already demonstrates its own inclusivity, because it recognizes both the path of fear, exegetically connected to the concubines, and the path of love, symbolized by the queens. The two ways converge in the dynamic of perfection, in such a way that, beyond any rigid examinations of the stages of the path of Christian perfection, the young women, concubines, and queens are all part of the same dynamic that leads to identification with the one dove whose perfection gushes from the divine immanence, in the Holy Spirit, the gift of God to men.

Thus, in summary, if one seeks to identify a tentative structure of the commentary looking at the *Gliederung*, few secure elements emerge. First, after the prologue with the classic rhetorical function, it is evident from a perspective of content that the last homily constitutes a conclusion. Another evident element is the organization of the first five homilies based on degrees of successive purifications that culminate with the union between the bride and her Beloved. One could also recognize two other groups in Homilies VI–X, which translate in ecclesiological terms the progress traced for the soul in the first five homilies, and in Homilies XI–XV, which expand the ecclesial discourse to the historical-salvific dimension. The synthetic and structural sections at the beginning of Homilies VI and XI could support this hypothesis. However, what is more important is that the very function of all of the homilies that follow the first five seems to be a progressive widening of the perspective that, on the one hand, aims to break any attempt to typify spiritual growth at certain specified stages and, on the other, indicates perfection more precisely as the very dynamic of the continuous progress of the *epektasis* that the sacramental dimension discloses to the Christian. It seems precisely that the numerous exegetical redoublings tend to relativize the exegesis of the concrete step to return to the direction of the ontological movement disclosed by identification with Christ. Liturgy, morality, and ontology thus continuously interact in a bold and profound construction. At the center of each of the three moments

is a fundamental Christological passage that illuminates the very ontology of man, the angels, and the Church. In *Homily* IV there is the exegesis of the nuptial bed on the basis of which the veil of the flesh is the only possibility of access to God; in *Homily* VIII, this is applied to the angels themselves, who are also bound to apophatism and can know God only in His Body and therefore through the Church; and in *Homily* XIII, where the two natures of Christ are presented as the real point of contact between man and God, in such a way that the economy of salvation is the only way to immanence. From this perspective, one can appreciate the interaction in the Commentary on the *Song* of all fundamental themes of Gregory's theology, developed over the course of his life both in the Trinitarian field and in the Christological and anthropological fields.

3 The Concatenation of Thought

3.1 *Exegesis and Ontology*

The *Gliderung* and the proposed analysis suggest that the departure point of Gregory's commentary is, in the first place, methodological. The initial question is how to interpret the text of the *Song of Songs*, whose literal meaning seems to immediately show the human love of a husband and wife, with all the passion and carnality proper to it. The framework of Gregory's answer is the polemic between the literal and allegorical exegesis:

To some of the ecclesiastical writers it seems good to follow the text of the Holy Scriptures to the letter in each passage, and they do not admit that, through symbolic meanings and allegorical senses, it has affirmed something for our utility.⁹

Gregory assumes the lens of spiritual utility as the *ratio* of his interpretation. However, the epistemological analysis is rooted in his ontological conception,¹⁰ as is already evident in the proem, where the divine prohibition in Gn 2.16–

9 τισι τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν παρίστασθαι τῇ λέξει τῆς ἁγίας γραφῆς διὰ πάντων δοκεῖ καὶ τὸ δι' αἰνιγματῶν τε καὶ ὑπονοιῶν εἰρήσθαι τι παρ' αὐτῆς εἰς ὠφέλειαν ἡμῶν οὐ συντίθενται. *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 4.10–13).

10 On the relationship between exegesis and theology in Gregory's, see G.I. Gargano, *La teoria di Gregorio di Nissa sul Cantico dei cantici: indagine su alcune indicazioni di metodo esegetico*, Roma 1981 and F. Vinel, "Du commentaire biblique à l'affirmation dogmatique: l'expérience théologique au IV^e siècle", *Revue des sciences religieuses* 82 (2008) 161–177.

17 is interpreted in the sense of identifying the tree of life with that of the knowledge of good and evil. In fact, this interpretive option is based on an epistemological perspective that renders the perception of the truth dependent on the ontological consistency of the relationship to the known reality, rather than by conceptual understanding, insofar as evil is presented as the mere absence of being, and therefore of good and of life. Knowing simply means entering in relation with what is.

In this way, the question about the form of the appropriate exegesis for the text of the *Song* is reconnected to apophatism and, therefore, to the conception of knowledge in a metaphysical context where the being of the creature is simultaneously radically separate from the Creator but rooted in the relation with Him:

Again, in the passages that follow, the soul, that is the spouse, reaches a higher philosophy, showing the inaccessibility and incomprehensibility (τὸ ἀπρόσιτόν τε καὶ ἀχώρητον) of the divine power for human reasonings. In this passage it is said: “your name is a perfume (Μύρον) poured out”. For, it seems to me that with this discourse it is indicated, in a certain manner, that it is not possible that the infinite (ἄόριστον) nature be exactly understood in the signification of a name. But all the power of concepts and every expression of words and names, even if it seems to have something great and suitable to the divinity, does not have the natural capacity to attain being in itself. But starting from traces and glimmers, our reason conjectures on that which is unknown, representing to itself, based upon a certain analogy (ἐκ τινος ἀναλογίας), the incomprehensible through that which is understood. It is said, in fact, that whatever name we can imagine, among those that correspond to the perfume of the divinity, expressing that which we say, do not manifest the perfume itself, but with the theological names (θεολογικοῖς) we indicate [only] some light traces of the perfume (λείψανον ἄτμου) of the divine fragrance (τῆς θείας εὐωδίας). Thus by the vases, from which the perfume has been poured out, one is ignorant of the nature itself of the perfume that was poured out of the vases, but from a certain indistinct quality, left by the perfumes on the bottom of the vase, we form a conjecture on the poured out perfume. Therefore, from what has been said, we learn that the perfume itself of the Divinity, whatever it may be in [its] essence, is above every name and every concept. While the marvels that are contemplated in the universe furnish the matter for the theological names, with which we call [God] wise, powerful, good, holy, beatified and eternal, judge, saviour and with attributes of this type. All of them together do not indicate more than a

small quality of divine perfume, of which the entire creation is impregnated, in the guise of a vase for perfumes, thanks to the marvels that are contemplated in it.¹¹

The intellect can only find traces of the presence of the divine in creation, but it cannot conceptually grasp the very essence of God, insofar as He absolutely exceeds all of its possibilities. The infinite cannot be contained in the finite. Access to the one and triune God is possible, rather, only in relation, that is, through that encounter which is the theme of the biblical poem on which Gregory comments.

From this perspective, within the Cappadocian's thought, the refusal of literalism is the direct result of the apophatic epistemological option, which in turn is based on the ontological conception that recognizes the Trinity as the one eternal and infinite nature, absolutely distinct from creation. In fact, if it were possible to understand the text in a literal way, then natural knowledge would be enough to reach the one and triune God.

Thus, the spiritual exegesis is spiritual from a perspective that is not merely noetic, but spiritual in the properly personal sense. This is why Gregory reiterates the reference to the angels, that is, to those purely spiritual creatures who already enjoy the state of perfect disposition in the face of God, which is the true goal of the progression of the soul of man:

11 Πάλιν ἐν τοῖς ἐφεξῆς ὑψηλοτέρας ἄπτεται φιλοσοφίας ἡ ψυχὴ, ἡ νόμῃ, τὸ ἀπρόσιτόν τε καὶ ἀχώρητον λογισμοῖς ἀνθρωπίνους τῆς θείας δυνάμεως ἐνδεικνυμένη, ἐν οἷς φησι Μύρον ἐκκενωθὲν ὄνομά σοι· τοιοῦτον γάρ τι δοκεῖ μοι διὰ τοῦ λόγου τούτου σημαίνεισθαι, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ὀνοματικὴ σημασίᾳ περιληφθῆναι δι' ἀκριβείας τὴν ἀόριστον φύσιν· ἀλλὰ πᾶσα νοημάτων δύναμις καὶ πᾶσα ῥημάτων τε καὶ ὀνομάτων ἔμφασις, καὶν τι μέγα καὶ θεοπρεπὲς ἔχειν δόξῃ, αὐτοῦ τοῦ ὄντος ἐφάπασθαι φύσιν οὐκ ἔχει· ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἐξ ἰχνῶν τινων καὶ ἐναυσμάτων ὁ λόγος ἡμῶν τοῦ ἀδήλου καταστοχάζεται διὰ τῶν καταλαμβανομένων εἰκάζων ἕκ τινος ἀναλογίας τὸ ἀκατάληπτον. ὅ τι γὰρ ἂν ἐπινοήσωμεν, φησὶν, ὄνομα γνωριστικὸν τοῦ τῆς θεότητος μύρου, οὐκ αὐτὸ τὸ μύρον διὰ τῆς ἐμφάσεως τῶν λεγομένων σημαίνομεν, ἀλλὰ βραχὺ τι λείψανον αἰμοῦ τῆς θείας εὐωδίας τοῦ θεολογικοῦς ὀνόμασιν ἐνδεικνύμεθα. ὥς ἐπὶ τῶν ἀγγείων, ὧν ἂν ἐκκενωθῇ τὸ μύρον, αὐτὸ μὲν τῇ αὐτοῦ φύσει ἀγνωεῖται τὸ μύρον τὸ ἐκκενωθὲν τῶν ἀγγείων, οἷον ἔστιν· ἐξ ἀμυδράς δέ τινος τῆς ὑπολειφθείσης ἐκ τῶν αἰμάτων τῷ ἀγγεῖω ποιότητος στοχασμὸν τινα περὶ τοῦ ἐκκενωθέντος μύρου ποιοῦμεθα. τοῦτο οὖν ἔστιν ὃ διὰ τῶν εἰρημένων μαρτάνομεν, ὅτι αὐτὸ μὲν τὸ τῆς θεότητος μύρον, ὃ τί ποτε κατ' οὐσίαν ἔστιν, ὑπὲρ πάντων ἔστιν ὄνομα τε καὶ νόημα· τὰ δὲ τῷ παντὶ ἐνθεωρούμενα θαύματα τῶν θεολογικῶν ὀνομάτων τὴν ὕλην δίδωσι, δι' ὧν σοφόν, δυνατόν, ἀγαθόν, ἅγιον, μακάριόν τε καὶ αἰδῖον καὶ κριτὴν καὶ σωτῆρα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα κατονομάζομεν· ἅπερ πάντα ποιότητά τινα βραχεῖαν τοῦ θείου μύρου ἐνδείκνυται, ἣν πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις διὰ τῶν ἐνθεωρουμένων θαυμάτων σκεύους τινὸς μυρεψικοῦ δίκην ἐν αὐτῇ ἀπεμάξατο. *Cant I* (GNO VI 36,12–38,2).

Indeed, the person who before such words, whose immediate meaning speaks of carnal pleasures, does not slip into impure thoughts, but by these words is conducted as by hand to the philosophy of the divine realities, that is, to pure thoughts, shows to no longer be human and to no longer have a nature composed together of flesh and blood, but shows to have that life of the saints which we hope to receive in the resurrection, in that such a person has become like the angels on account of impassibility (ισάγγελος διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας). In fact, after the resurrection the body, becoming changed in its elements to enter into incorruptibility, is united (συμπλέκεται) to the soul of the man, while now the passions that plague us through the flesh will not rise along with those bodies, but our life will receive in gift a condition of peace.¹²

Interpreting the *Song* in the literal, and therefore carnal, sense would in the first place be an ontological error, as a projection of the creatural categories onto God. Rather, the spiritual interpretation approaches the text from the eschatological perspective and, therefore, from the light that emanates from Christ onto being, man, and history.

Note in the passage how the spousal metaphor serves the affirmation of the union of the soul and the body at the *eschaton*. With respect to the Neoplatonic and stoic background, to which the same terminology could allude, we are here in a totally distinct ontological context: the use of the verb συμπλέκω, which makes reference to the act characteristic of the spousal union, becomes an expression of the perfect harmony of which the soul and body will take part in the union with God.

Here the eschatological perspective illuminates the hermeneutic paradox: it seems that for Gregory the condition of accessing the meaning of the text is to already possess this meaning. The apparent contradiction is dissolved precisely on the ontological level of relation, because the same meaning is presented as a gift that one does not possess in oneself, but in relation with God in Christ. In the same way, the condition of the human person in the resurrection is not only found after death, but is already present and attainable in time.

12 ἀληθῶς γὰρ ὁ διὰ τῶν τοιούτων ῥημάτων, ὧν ἡ πρόχειρος ἔμφασις τὰς σαρκώδεις ἡδυπαθείας ἐνδείκνυται, μὴ κατολισθαίνων εἰς τὴν ῥυπώσαν διάνοιαν ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὴν τῶν θείων φιλοσοφίαν, ἐπὶ τὰς καθαρὰς ἐννοίας διὰ τῶν ῥημάτων τούτων χειραγωγούμενος δείκνυσι τὸ μηκέτι ἄνθρωπος εἶναι μηδὲ σαρκί καὶ αἵματι συμμεμιγμένην τὴν φύσιν ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐλπίζομένην ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τῶν ἁγίων ζωὴν ἐπιδείκνυται ἰσάγγελος διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας γενόμενος. ὥς γὰρ μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν τὸ μὲν σῶμα μεταστοιχειωθὲν πρὸς τὸ ἀφθαρτον τῇ ψυχῇ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου συμπλέκεται, τὰ δὲ νῦν διὰ σαρκὸς ἡμῖν ἐνοχλοῦντα πάθη τοῖς σώμασιν ἐκείνοις οὐ συνανίσταται ἀλλὰ τις εἰρηνικὴ κατάστασις τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν διαδέχεται *Cant* 1 (GNO VI 29,20–30,12).

The spiritual perfection of each Christian is, then, presented starting from the condition of the angels who are already definitively turned toward God. The entire interpretation of Gregory seems to aim precisely at evoking the free adherence on the part of the human being to this movement. The angels themselves are thus the concrete element through which the theme of the *epektasis* is introduced into the commentary, that is, the unceasing increase in the real participation in the infinity of divine life:

In fact, since it was announced that the life after the resurrection will be similar (ὅμοιον) to the condition (καταστάσει) of the angels—and the One who announces it does not lie—it would be proper that even life in the world would be a preparation for the life we hope for after it, in such a way that those who live in the flesh and in the field of the world do not lead a life according to the flesh nor configure themselves to this world, but they practice in anticipation the life they long for during the life in this world. Thus the bride inspires in the souls of those who follow her a confirmation by means of a vow, that their life in this field will be directed at contemplating the Powers, imitating the angelic purity through impassibility (ἀπαθείας). In fact, just as love (ἀγάπης) becomes more and more kindled, that is, it is lifted up and with addition it grows always toward the better, it is said that the good will of God be carried out in heaven as in earth because the impassibility of the angels is realized in us as well.¹³

The reference to a vow in the text seems to point to the background of the community of Olympias at Constantinople, in addition to the liturgical context of the community gathered at Nyssa. However, beyond any historical consideration, what matters most here is the identification of the angelic *apatheia* with the *epektasis*. In contrast to the carnal passions implied by a literalist reading of the *Song*, the text moves from the angelic condition, therefore, from the essential reality of these purely spiritual beings.

13 ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τὸν μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν βίον ὅμοιον ἐπήγγελται τῇ ἀγγελικῇ καταστάσει [τῶν ἀνθρώπων] γενήσεσθαι (ἀψευδὴς δὲ ὁ ἐπαγγελούμενος), ἀκόλουθον ἂν εἴη καὶ τὴν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ζωὴν πρὸς τὴν ἐλπίζομένην μετὰ ταῦτα παρασκευάζεσθαι, ὥστε ἐν σαρκὶ ζῶντας καὶ ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ τοῦ κόσμου διάγοντας μὴ κατὰ σάρκα ζῆν μηδὲ συσχηματίζεσθαι τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ προμελετᾶν τὸν ἐλπίζομενον βίον διὰ τῆς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ζωῆς. διὰ τοῦτο τὴν διὰ τοῦ ὅρκου βεβαίωσιν ἐμποιεῖται ταῖς ψυχαῖς τῶν μαθητευομένων ἡ νύμφη, ὥστε τὴν ζωὴν αὐτῶν τὴν ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ τούτῳ κατορθοῦμένην πρὸς τὰς δυνάμεις βλέπειν, μιμουμένην διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας τὴν ἀγγελικὴν καθαρότητα· οὕτω γὰρ ἐγειρομένης τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ ἐξεγειρομένης (ὅπερ ἐστὶν ὑψουμένης τε καὶ αἰεὶ διὰ προσθήκης πρὸς τὸ μείζον ἐπαυξομένης) τὸ ἀγαθὸν εἶπε θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ τελειοῦσθαι ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς τῆς ἀγγελικῆς καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀπαθείας κατορθομένης. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 134,9–135,6).

The intimate connection between the angelic *katastasis* and apophatism is presented by Gregory in a sharp and clear way commenting on Ct 3.3:

Thus the soul went through the entire angelic order and since she did not see that which she sought among the goods that she found, she thought to herself: “Perhaps for them the one whom I love is comprehensible?” and says to them: “Have you seen him whom my heart loves?” (Ct 3.3). However, because they were silent before the question and with their silence they demonstrated that even for them that which she seeks is incomprehensible, as soon as she had gone in mental pursuit throughout the entire spiritual city and did not get to know what she was looking for even among intelligible and incorporeal beings, then renouncing everything she had found, she knew whom she sought, whose existence is known only in the impossibility of comprehending that which He is. In fact, every element that makes Him known is an obstacle for those who seek Him come to find Him.¹⁴

As in *De Vita Moysis*,¹⁵ Gregory draws as a consequence of the unbridgeable ontological gap between the Creator and creature the affirmation that even the angels cannot by themselves know the one and triune God. Despite their preeminent position in the ladder of beings, not even the purely spiritual creatures can intellectually understand the divine nature. In Gregory’s metaphysical commentary, theology and poetry converge in the contemplation of the silence of the angels in the face of the question of the bride in search of the Bridegroom. However, the courage of the bishop of Nyssa goes further:

And if it is not too bold to say, perhaps [the angelic powers] have marvelled seeing the beauty of the Bridegroom in the Bride, invisible and incomprehensible to all. In fact, He who “no one has ever seen” (Jn 1.18), as John says, and who “no human being has seen or can see” (1 Tim 6.16),

14 ἡ μὲν οὖν περιήρει διερευνωμένη πάσαν ἀγγελικὴν διακόσμησιν καὶ ὥς οὐκ εἶδεν ἐν τοῖς εὐρεθείσιν ἀγαθοῖς τὸ ζητούμενον τοῦτο καὶ ἐαυτὴν ἐλογίσατο· ἄρα κἂν ἐκεῖνοις ληπτὸν ἔστι τὸ παρ’ ἐμοῦ ἀγαπώμενον; καὶ φησι πρὸς αὐτούς· μὴ κἂν ὑμεῖς ὃν ἠγάπησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου εἶδετε; σιωπησάντων δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοιαύτην ἐρώτησιν καὶ διὰ τῆς σιωπῆς ἐνδειξαμένων τὸ καὶ ἐκεῖνοις ἀληπτον εἶναι τὸ παρ’ αὐτῆς ζητούμενον, ὥς διεξήλθε τῇ πολυπραγμοσύνῃ τῆς διανοίας πάσαν ἐκείνην τὴν ὑπερκόσμιον πόλιν καὶ οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς τε καὶ ἀσωμάτοις εἶδεν οἷον ἐπόθησεν, τότε καταλιπούσα πᾶν τὸ εὕρισκόμενον οὕτως ἐγνώρισε τὸ ζητούμενον, τὸ ἐν μόνῳ τῷ μὴ καταλαμβάνεσθαι τί ἐστίν ὅτι ἔστι γινωσκόμενον, οὐ πᾶν γνῶρισμα καταληπτικὸν ἐμπόδιον τοῖς ἀναζητοῦσι πρὸς τὴν εὕρεσιν γίνεται. *Cant VI* (GNO VI 182,10–183,5).

15 Cf. *Vit Moys* 11, 164–165 (GNO VII/1 87).

as Paul testifies, made the Church His Body and built in love through the addition of the saved, "until we all attain [...] mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ" (Eph 4.13). Therefore, if the Church is the Body of Christ and the Head of the Body is Christ, Who forms the face of the Church with His own image, perhaps the friends of the Bridegroom are heartened watching her because in her they see the invisible more distinctly. Like those who do not manage to see the disk of the sun, they see it in splendor reflected in the water, so also [the angelic powers] in the pure mirror that is the Church they contemplate the Sun of Justice known through that which appears.¹⁶

The friends of the Bridegroom, namely, the angels, cannot directly know their Creator, who exceeds any intellectual capacity, even the greatest in the cosmos. However, the bride herself, who goes in search of her Love, is a source of knowledge of the Bridegroom for them, as the Church is the Body of Christ. Gregory's interpretation is at the same time of great theological depth and extreme dramatic effectiveness. Unlike what happens in the tragedy of Oedipus, who in his search for the culprit of the misfortunes of Thebes discovers that he himself is the origin of the evil, here the bride in her passionate search for her Love discovers that she has in her own self the way to access Him. The difference of theological grammar with respect to Origen is evident: now the angel, superior from an intellectual standpoint, kneels before the humanity of the bride, assumed by the Spouse.

Gregory's exegesis continuously weaves the plot of the *Song* with a Johanne and Pauline warps. From the latter component, mediated by the entire Judeo-Christian tradition, comes the affirmation that the angelic powers were also granted knowledge of the mystery of the salvific economy toward human beings.¹⁷ Thus, the awe of the celestial hosts becomes the spiritual meaning of Ct 4.9:

16 εἰ δὲ μὴ τολμηρόν ἐστιν εἰπεῖν, τάχα κάκεινοι διὰ τῆς νύμφης τὸ τοῦ νυμφίου κάλλος ἰδόντες ἐθαύμασαν τὸ πᾶσι τοῖς οὖσιν ἀόρατόν τε καὶ ἀκατάληπτον· ὃν γὰρ Οὐδεὶς ἑώρακε πώποτε, καθὼς φησιν Ἰωάννης, Οὐδὲ ἰδεῖν τις δύναται, καθὼς ὁ Παῦλος μαρτύρεται, οὗτος σῶμα ἑαυτοῦ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἐποίησε καὶ διὰ τῆς προσθήκης τῶν σωζομένων οἰκοδομεῖ ἑαυτὸν ἐν ἀγάπῃ, Μέχρις ἂν κατανήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ. εἰ οὖν σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ ἐκκλησία, κεφαλὴ δὲ τοῦ σώματος ὁ Χριστὸς τῷ ἰδίῳ χαρακτῆρι μορφῶν τῆς ἐκκλησίας τὸ πρόσωπον, τάχα διὰ τοῦτο πρὸς ταύτην βλέποντες οἱ φίλοι τοῦ νυμφίου ἐκαρδιώθησαν, ὅτι τρανότερον ἐν αὐτῇ τὸν ἀόρατον βλέπουσιν· καθάπερ οἱ αὐτὸν τοῦ ἡλίου τὸν κύκλον ἰδεῖν ἀδυνατοῦντες, διὰ δὲ τῆς τοῦ ὕδατος αὐγῆς εἰς αὐτὸν ὀρώντες, οὕτω κάκεινοι ὡς ἐν κατόπτρῳ καθαρῷ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἥλιον βλέπουσι τὸν διὰ τοῦ φαινομένου κατανοοῦμενον. *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 256,9–257,5).

17 Cf. *ibidem* 254,13–20.

rendered more divine and transformed by the beautiful change into a higher glory with respect to the glory she had, in such a way as to inspire awe in the choir of angels surrounding the Bridegroom who together address to her the astonished greeting “You have ravished my heart, our sister and bride” (Ct 4.9). In fact, having obtained impassibility, this very condition of impassibility, which shines both in her and in the angels, introduces her into kinship and fraternity with the incorporeal beings.¹⁸

The whole life of the Christian is a “beautiful change” that unites angels and human beings in the unceasing movement from glory to glory in God. The spiritual meaning is thus essentially ontological, as the Christian perfection consists precisely in openness to that condition of impassibility, as an indefectible disposition toward the one and triune God, who fraternally unites the angels and human beings, the latter in their unity of soul and body. And the road to achieve this condition is in both cases only one: the Humanity of Christ.

3.2 *The Christological Center*

In fact, continuing to develop the metaphor of light that was just seen in the apophatic context, Gregory adds that the only way to access the Divine is the salvific economy, therefore, the very liturgy celebrated on Easter, the framework of the commentary:

He therefore continues: “Our couch, too, is verdant” (Ct 1.16). That is: human nature has known you [Lord] or certainly will know you insofar as you became shaded in the economy. This is why the text says: you came my beloved, graceful, and you have become shaded in our bed. If, in fact, you were not shaded, veiling from yourself the pure light of Divinity with the form of the servant, who could survive your appearance? Because no one who sees the Lord will continue to live (cf. Ex 33.20).¹⁹

18 μεταποιηθεῖσα πρὸς τὸ θειότερον καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης ἐν ᾗ ἦν πρὸς τὴν ἀνωτέραν δόξαν μεταμορφωθείσα διὰ τῆς ἀγαθῆς ἀλλοιώσεως, ὡς θαῦμα γενέσθαι τῷ περὶ τὸν νυμφίον τῶν ἀγγέλων χορῷ καὶ πάντας εὐφρύνῃ πρὸς αὐτὴν τὴν θαυμαστικὴν ταύτην προέσθαι φωνὴν ὅτι Ἐκαρδίωςας ἡμᾶς, ἀδελφὴ ἡμῶν νύμφη· ὁ γὰρ τῆς ἀπαθείας χαρακτὴρ ὁμοίως ἐπιλάμπων αὐτῇ τε καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις εἰς τὴν τῶν ἀσωμάτων αὐτὴν ἄγει συγγενεῖάν τε καὶ ἀδελφότητα τὴν ἐν σαρκὶ τὸ ἀπαθὲς κατορθώσασαν (*ibidem* 253,15–254,4).

19 Εἶτα ἐπήγαγε Πρὸς κλίνῃ ἡμῶν σύσκιος. τουτέστιν ἔγνω σε ἥτοι γινώσεται ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις σύσκιον τῇ οἰκονομίᾳ γενόμενον· ἦλθες γάρ φησι σὺ ὁ καλὸς ἀδελφιδός, ὁ ὥραιος, 6.108 πρὸς τῇ κλίνῃ ἡμῶν σύσκιος γενόμενος. εἰ γὰρ μὴ συνεσκίασας αὐτὸς σεαυτὸν τὴν ἄκρατον τῆς θεότητος ἀκτῖνα συγκαλύψας τῇ τοῦ δούλου μορφῇ, τίς ἂν ὑπέστη σου τὴν ἐμφάνειαν; οὐδεὶς γὰρ ὄψεται πρόσωπον κυρίου καὶ ζήσεται. *Cant IV* (GNO VI 107,9–108,4).

The passage is at the same time extremely profound from a theological standpoint and amazing on the level of poetic expression, because paradox and oxymoron converge in the identification of the shadow of human corporeality with the way of access to the divine Light. The veil reveals, in such a way that Origen's mystic of light is radically subverted in Gregory's mystic of darkness, based on the apophatism and on the radical distinction between the ontological order of the Trinity and creation. The absence of every possible metaphysical intermediary between God and the world, an intermediary that was, rather, the authentic hallmark of the Greek construction of Plato and Aristotle, induces a relational reinterpretation, whose ontological core is Christ Himself.²⁰ In fact, Gregory writes:

And the bride uses the name of bed in the figurative sense, interpreting it as the union of human nature with the Divine.²¹

Christ is not an intermediate level between God and the world, according to what the Arian heresy proposed, but He belongs perfectly to both ontological realms: He belongs to the Trinity as the Son of God, and to creation as the son of man. Thus, the nuptial bed, of the union between the Bridegroom and the bride, is the symbol of the union between the *Logos* and the flesh. In this way, the latter becomes the only possible way to access God. The apophatism that denies the possibility of the conceptual comprehension of the divine essence thus brings back to relation:

“Tell me, you whom my heart loves” (Ct 1.7). In fact, I call you such, because your name is beyond every other name, and for every rational nature it is ineffable and incomprehensible. Therefore, the relation (σχέσις) of my soul with you is the name of yours that gives knowledge of your goodness.²²

The *schesis* is, thus, presented as the only authentic possibility of approximation to the God of Jesus Christ. The knowledge is understood here in the biblical

20 See Miguel Brugarolas' contribution to this volume: *The Incarnate Logos: Gregory of Nyssa's In Canticum Canticorum Christological core*.

21 κλίνην δὲ ὀνομάζει ἡ νύμφη τῇ τροπικῇ σημασίᾳ τὴν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἀνάκρασιν τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως ἐρμηνεύουσα. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 108,10–12).

22 ἀπάγγειλόν μοι, ὃν ἡγάπησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου. οὕτω γὰρ σε κατονομάζω, ἐπειδὴ τὸ ὄνομά σου ὑπὲρ πᾶν ἐστὶν ὄνομα καὶ πάσῃ φύσει λογικῇ ἀφραστόν τε καὶ ἀχώρητον. οὐκοῦν ὄνομά σοί ἐστι γνωριστικὸν τῆς σῆς ἀγαθότητος ἢ τῆς ψυχῆς μου περὶ σὲ σχέσις. *Cant* II (GNO VI 61,13–17).

sense as a union, and no longer as a conceptual reduction. The incarnation establishes an ontological relation between time and eternity, in such a way that the possibility of a relationship with the Trinity is a radical divine gift. But at the same time this gift actually belongs to the soul that welcomes the Bridegroom, opening itself up to desire:

Thus, ceasing to speak to the young women, the bride goes back to petitioning the groom, taking as name of the One who she desires the intimate relation (ἐνδιάθετον σχέσιν) to Him.²³

The conception of Platonic *eros* as the intermediate degree of being is now radically rethought in light of the ontological difference between God and man. In this way the desire for her Bridegroom not only is no more a dangerous passion, but the very way to access His presence, which is the true origin of this desire. In fact, the divine indwelling within the soul is the foundation of this relation that is immanent to man himself.²⁴

It is precisely here that Gregory sees the point of contact between divine economy and the divine immanence, in the sense that the desire pushes the soul toward that only Source capable of satisfying its thirst:

I, running toward you who are the source, will sip from the divine drink with which you quench the thirst of the thirsty, with water flowing from your side because the wound has opened this source. And whoever drinks of this becomes a source of water that will flow forth for life eternal (Jn 4.14).²⁵

Christ on the Cross becomes the meeting place with the fontal identity of the Father, because from the pierced side there flows into history and into the world that life without limits toward which every person tends. Thus, the Crucifixion is recognized as the perfect image of the Father and archetype of every Chris-

23 Διὰ τοῦτο καταλιποῦσα τὸν πρὸς τὰς νεάνιδας λόγον πάλιν δι' εὐχῆς ἀνακαλεῖ τὸν νυμφίον ὄνομα ποιησαμένη τοῦ ποθομένου τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐνδιάθετον σχέσιν (*ibidem* 61,1–3).

24 On this topic, see M. Brugarolas, "Beauty and the Presence of God in the Soul: Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on Ct 5.2", in: J. Rutherford (ed.), *The Beauty of God's Presence in the Fathers of the Church. The Proceedings of the Eighth International Patristic Conference, Maynooth, 2012*, Dublin 2014, 128–149.

25 καὶ δραμοῦσα πρὸς σέ τὴν πηγὴν σπάσω τοῦ θείου πόματος, ὃ σὺ τοῖς διψῶσι πηγάξεις προχέων τὸ ὕδωρ ἐκ τῆς πλευρᾶς τοῦ σιδήρου τὴν φλέβα ταύτην ἀναστομώσαντος, οὗ ὁ γευσάμενος πηγὴ γίνεται ὕδατος ἀλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. *Cant* 11 (GNO VI 62,3–7).

tian, who, drinking from the divine source, becomes a source in turn, like Christ is the Source as Son of the Father who is the Source of Being itself.

The ascension of the *epektasis*, as always growing union from glory to glory with God, corresponds to this descending movement, which from the Source to the source carries life to the human being.²⁶ Its foundation is still consistently Christ:

You are not only truly beautiful, but you are the essence (οὐσία) itself of beauty, insofar as you are always such, that is, you are always what you are. And times of feast and famine do not happen in you, but you extend (συμπαρτείνων) the season of eternal flowering of your life. Your name is love for all men (φιλανθρωπία).²⁷

We return to relation, because the only possible way we can name God is the love that He has for the human being. Still the scriptural language merges with ontological language, to express the identity of Christ and of Beauty, the knowledge of which is possible only in the personal relation that is made possible by the very love that He pours out over every man and woman. Note how in the passage cited the verb *τείνω*, at the basis of *συμπαρτείνω*, is also at the root of the term *ἐπέκτασις*. The semantic displacement between the two expressions is entrusted entirely to prepositions: from the coextensive dimension expressed through *sun* and *para*, which characterizes the eternal ontology of God, the meaning moves to the simultaneous union (*epi*) and exceeding (*ek*), which characterizes the relation between the ontology of the creature and that of the Creator.²⁸ Thus, the bride's embrace of her Bridegroom becomes symbolic of the act of faith that overcomes the absolute limits of categorical knowledge to welcome the presence of the First Principle itself into the soul:

After having recently abandoned them [the angels] leaving behind all of creation and abandoning all that is known intellectually in creation, and abandoning each positive approach, in faith I found the beloved and I will never again leave Him clinging onto Him whom I found with the grip of

26 See also H. Boersma, "Becoming Human in the Face of God: Gregory of Nyssa's Unending Search for the Beatific Vision", *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 17 (2015) 1–21.

27 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 106,20–107,5).

28 Cf. J. Daniélou—H. Musurillo, *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, Crestwood (NY) 1979, 59.

faith until He is in my inmost part. Certainly the inmost part is the heart that now becomes capable of receiving the divine indwelling of God, once it returns to the condition in which it was formed by the One who conceived it. Certainly one would not err thinking that the *mother* is the first cause of our subsistence.²⁹

Faith restores man in his own being, in the sense that it returns him to the relation with his Creator, making the human person capable of Him once again. The biblical and ontological terminology continuously interact in the more elevated “philosophy” of Gregory. From this perspective, in Christ man is given the possibility of participating in the true nature of the Good, without there being any confusion between the Creator and the creature, but in an authentic relation that allows an infinite growth:

In this way he [Paul] taught us, I believe, that, regarding the blessed nature of the Good, a great part is constituted by what we sometimes find ourselves; but infinitely greater than what is grasped each time is that which remains still beyond that, and this experience is continually repeated for those who participate of the Good, insofar as one enjoys continual growth, which is actuated in the entire eternity of the ages through always greater realities.³⁰

Interestingly, in *Homily VI*, when Gregory traces a true and proper Porphyrian tree in which he introduces the dual distinction, material-immaterial and created-uncreated, man is counted among the infinite realities.³¹ In this framework Daniélou more appropriately identifies the difference with respect to God in the fact that God is infinite in act, while man is infinite in becoming.³² It can

29 Μικρόν ὅτε παρήλθον ἀπ’ αὐτῶν ἀφείσα πάσαν τὴν κτίσιν καὶ παρελθοῦσα πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῇ κτίσει νοούμενον καὶ πάσαν καταληπτικὴν ἔφοδον καταλιποῦσα, τῇ πίστει εὗρον τὸν ἀγαπώμενον καὶ οὐκέτι μεθήσω τῇ τῆς πίστεως λαβῇ τοῦ εὐρεθέντος ἀντεχομένη, ἕως ἂν ἐντὸς γένηται τοῦ ἐμοῦ ταμείου. καρδιά δὲ πάντως τὸ ταμεῖον ἐστίν, ἢ τότε γίνεται δεκτικὴ τῆς θείας αὐτοῦ ἐνοικήσεως, ὅταν ἐπανεέλθῃ πρὸς τὴν κατὰστασιν ἐκείνην, ἐν ᾗ τὸ κατ’ ἀρχὰς ἦν ὅτε ἐπλάσθη ὑπὸ τῆς συλλαβούσης. μητέρα δὲ πάντως τὴν πρώτην τῆς συστάσεως ἡμῶν αἰτίαν νοῶν τις οὐχ ἁμαρτήσεται. *Cant VI* (GNO VI 183,5–15).

30 διδάσκων οἶμαι διὰ τούτων ἡμᾶς ὅτι τῆς μακαρίας ἐκείνης τῶν ἀγαθῶν φύσεως πολὺ μὲν ἐστὶ τὸ αἰεὶ εὐρισκόμενον, ἀπειροπλάσιον δὲ τοῦ πάντοτε καταλαμβάνομένου τὸ ὑπερκείμενον καὶ τοῦτο εἰς τὸ διηνεκές γίνεται τῷ μετέχοντι ἐν πάσῃ τῇ τῶν αἰώνων ἀϊδιότῃ διὰ τῶν αἰεὶ μειζόνων τῆς ἐπαυξήσεως τοῖς μετέχουσι γινομένης. *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 245,22–246,5).

31 Cf. *Cant VI* (GNO VI 175,1–179,19).

32 See Daniélou, *Platonisme et Théologie*, 299.

be said that God is infinite in Himself, while man is infinite in relation. This means, however, that for Gregory the *epektasis* and the relation with the Trinity in Christ belongs to the very identity of the human person.

The image of the arrow that has inflicted the wound of love on the bride thus serves as a synthesis of the Cappadocian's doctrine, which links exegesis, ontology, spiritual theology, and dogma:

And in so saying, [the bride] praises the archer for his good aim thanks to which the arrow was well directed at her. In fact she says "I am faint with love" (Ct 2.5), showing with this expression the wound deeply driven into her heart. But the archer who shot the arrow is love. We learned from the Holy Scriptures that God is Love (cf. 1Jn 4.8–16), who hurls His chosen arrow—the Only-Begotten God—toward those who are saved, having soaked the triple point of the dart—the dart is faith—in the Spirit of life, so as to introduce it to the one who the archer has reached with the arrow, as says the Lord: My Father and I "will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (Jn 14.23). Therefore, the soul, raised by the divine ascents, sees in itself the sweet dart of love, from which it was injured, and boasts of such a wound saying "I am faint with love" (Ct 2.5). Oh sweet and beautiful wound, through which life is poured in, like the breach of an arrow through an open door as an entrance.³³

Once again, the dynamic of the union is described through a movement in two moments: as in the fontal dimension that from the Father through Christ reaches the baptized, pulling him or her in through the free response in the infinite *epektasis* that fulfills his or her being, now the arrow is struck by Love itself which enters into the soul through it. Thus, the wound itself becomes the pride of the Christian because the Trinitarian indwelling is based precisely on

33 Ταῦτα εἰποῦσα ἐπαινεῖ τὸν τοξότην τῆς εὐστοχίας ὡς καλῶς ἐπ' αὐτῆς τὸ βέλος εὐθύνοντα· Τετρωμένη γάρ φησιν ἀγάπης ἐγώ. δείκνυσσι δὲ τῷ λόγῳ τὸ βέλος τὸ τῇ καρδίᾳ διὰ βάθους ἐγκείμενον. ὁ δὲ τοξότης τοῦ βέλους ἡ ἀγάπη ἐστίν· τὴν δὲ ἀγάπην τὸν θεὸν εἶναι παρὰ τῆς ἀγίας γραφῆς μεμαθήκαμεν, ὅς τὸ ἐκλεκτὸν ἑαυτοῦ βέλος, τὸν μονογενῆ θεόν, ἐπὶ τοὺς σωζομένους ἐκπέμπει τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ζωῆς τὴν τριπλὴν τῆς ἀκίδος ἀκμὴν περιχρώσας (ἀκίς δὲ ἡ πίστις ἐστίν), ἵνα, ἐν ᾧ ἂν γένηται, συνεισαγάγῃ μετὰ τοῦ βέλους καὶ τὸν τοξότην, ὡς φησιν ὁ κύριος ὅτι ἐγώ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ Ἐλευσόμεθα καὶ μονὴν παρ' αὐτῷ ποιησόμεθα. ὁρᾷ τοίνυν ἡ διὰ τῶν θείων ἀναβάσεων ὑψωθεῖσα ψυχὴ τὸ γλυκὺ τῆς ἀγάπης βέλος ἐν ἑαυτῇ, ᾧ ἐτρώθη, καὶ καύχημα ποιεῖται τὴν τοιαύτην πληγὴν λέγουσα ὅτι Τετρωμένη ἀγάπης ἐγώ. ὦ καλοῦ τραύματος καὶ γλυκείας πληγῆς, δι' ἧς ἡ ζωὴ ἐπὶ τὰ ἐντὸς διαδύεται ὥσπερ τινὰ θύραν καὶ εἴσοδον τὴν ἐκ τοῦ βέλους διαίρεισιν ἑαυτῇ ὑπανοίξασα. *Cant IV* (GNO VI 127,7–128,5).

the relation that becomes possible through it.³⁴ The movement of ascension originates right here, where paradoxically movement and stillness exist at the same time:

With this she says “his left hand is under my head and his right arm embraces me” (Ct 2.6), from which the arrow is directed toward the target, while the right arm, bringing and drawing to himself me so light, produces my upward trajectory. And at the same time I am sent (πεμπομένην) but am not separate from the archer, thus being carried from the strike and reposing in the archer’s hands.³⁵

Launched by Christ the soul is increasingly immersed in God, in turn becoming a dart that through Christ turns to Love. And this movement is realized through the Sacraments in the Church.

3.3 *The Sacraments and the Church*

Gregory, since *Homily 1*, says that he wants to offer a mystical interpretation (μυστικής θεωρίας)³⁶ of the *Song*, systematically and in an orderly way showing the ascent toward that which is perfect (ὁδῶ καὶ τάξει τὴν πρὸς τὸ τέλειον ἄνοδον).³⁷ This ascent is presented by Gregory in terms of the union with the Bridegroom, who aims through communion with Himself (πρὸς ἑαυτὸν κοινωνία) to beautify the soul, which is initially dark because of sin.³⁸ Evil is nothing more, in fact, than the privation of good and the distancing from what is better,³⁹ which blackens and makes the soul opaque, incapable of the aspiration to ascend and a slave to earthly desires. But Christ, the Good Shepherd, does not abandon man in sin and gives Himself to redeem him.⁴⁰

For Gregory, “mystical” means at the same time mystical. The Bride, in fact, recognizes that one cannot conceive a love greater than that of the Bridegroom in the following way:

34 Sarah Coakley’s contribution to the present volume highlights the connection between the spiritual dimension and Trinitarian faith.

35 διὰ τοῦτό φησιν Εὐάννουμος αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ τὴν κεφαλὴν μου, δι’ ἧς εὐθύνεται πρὸς τὸν σκοπὸν τὸ βέλος, ἡ δεξιὰ δὲ αὐτοῦ πρὸς ἑαυτὴν με διαλαβοῦσα καὶ ἐφελκυσταμένη κούφην με πρὸς τὴν ἄνω φορὰν ἀπεργάζεται, κάκει πεμπομένην καὶ τοῦ τοξότου μὴ χωριζομένην, ὥς ὁμοῦ τε φέρεσθαι διὰ τῆς βολῆς καὶ ταῖς χερσὶ τοῦ τοξότου ἐνανταπαύεσθαι. *Cant IV* (GNO VI 129,10–16).

36 *Cant I* (GNO VI 15,12).

37 *Ibidem* 17,11.

38 *Cant II* (GNO VI 49,17).

39 Cf. *ibidem* 56,8–10.

40 On the role of Baptism see Everett Ferguson’s contribution to this volume: *Theology of Baptism in the In Canticum Canticorum of Gregory of Nyssa*.

Teach me, she says, where you lead the flocks, so that I, finding the grazing of salvation, shall be satiated of *heavenly food*: whoever does not eat of it, in fact, cannot have access to life (ζωήν). And running toward you, who are the source, may I sip on the divine drink—yourself—which you make spring forth for the thirsty, pouring the water from your side, because iron has opened this vein. And whoever drinks of it will become a source that flows for eternal life.⁴¹

The passage, in its beauty, reveals the harmonious agreement of the different themes, which, modulated by the Eucharistic reference to the celestial food, presents the mystic life as a race toward Christ, who is at the same time source and drink, thanks to the correspondence between the sacramental dimension and the moment of the Passion of the Lord. The contemplative passion culminates in the Eucharistic union, in temporal concurrence with the wound to the side, which shows the apophatic aspect of the same union, as Christ is given as drink, but remains inexhaustible as the source of eternal life. It is important to keep in mind that for Gregory the source is the image of the apophatism, insofar as the water that springs from it can never be grasped by the limited capacity of man.⁴²

The apophatic dimension would also be the key to “I called to him but he did not answer me” in Ct 5.6. And the same can be said for the following verse, which narrates the encounter with the guards, who take off the bride's veil and strike her.⁴³ It is precisely the interpretation of the beatings that introduces Ps 22, which is typically sacramental in patristic readings, through the mediation of “if you beat him with the rod, he will not die” from Pr 23.13–14, likened to “it is I who bring both death and life, I who inflict wounds and heal them” from Dt 32.39. In a parallel exegesis to that of the wound just seen, the security infused in David by the rampart and staff of the Good Shepherd in Ps 22.4 becomes the hermeneutical key of the beatings:

Thanks to these [the beatings], in fact, the divine table (τῆς θείας τραπέζης) is prepared for him [David] and this is included in the rest of the

41 διδάξον οὖν με, φησί, ποῦ ποιμαίνεις, ἵνα εὐρούσα τὴν σωτήριον νομὴν ἐμφορηθῶ τῆς οὐρανίας τροφῆς, ἥς ὁ μὴ φαγών οὐ δύναται εἰς τὴν ζωὴν εἰσελθεῖν, καὶ δραμοῦσα πρὸς σέ τὴν πηγὴν σπάσω τοῦ θείου πόματος, ὃ σὺ τοῖς διψῶσι πηγάζεις προχέων τὸ ὕδωρ ἐκ τῆς πλευράς τοῦ σιδήρου τὴν φλέβα ταύτην ἀναστομώσαντος, οὗ ὁ γευσάμενος πηγὴ γίνεται ὕδατος ἀλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. *Cant II* (GNO VI 62,1–7).

42 Cf. *Cant XI* (GNO VI 319,5–322,12).

43 Cf. *Cant XII* (GNO VI 359,5–361,15).

psalm: both the oil on his head and the pure wine of the chalice, which produces the sober intoxication (τὴν νηφάλιον μέθην), and the mercy that rightly follows along with the long life in the house of the Father.⁴⁴

The text explicitly links the Eucharistic table, inserted into the whole of sacraments of Christian initiation,⁴⁵ to the sober intoxication that is the height of mysticism and contemplation. The divine table is presented as the key to the whole psalm, which accompanied the procession of the catechumens, whose culmination was precisely the inebriating reception of the Body and Blood of Christ, after the anointing with the sacred chrism.

Gregory resumes the Philonian theme of the sober intoxication,⁴⁶ highlighting the unity of the sacramental life and the spiritual life.⁴⁷ “It is for this reason that in the *Commentary on the Song* the social (and theological) standpoint of the union of the Word and the Church, as well as the individual (and mystical) standpoint of the union of the Word and the soul, ceaselessly interact. The Bride is both the individual soul and the Church.”⁴⁸ Contemplation is not, therefore, a mere intellectual operation of the individual, but the union with the Body of Christ in the *shadow* of sacramental mediation. Liturgy, ecstasy, and *epektasis* appear to be different moments in a single dynamic:

In this way you have to, in my view, understand the vine in bloom, whose wine that maketh glad the heart (cf. Ps 103.15) will on that day fill the goblet of wisdom and will be set before the guests so that they drink from the sublime announcement (ἐκ τοῦ ὑψηλοῦ κηρύγματος), according to [one's] capacity, in order [to reach] the good and the sober intoxication (ἀγαθὴν τε καὶ νηφάλιον μέθην); that intoxication—I mean—thanks to which human beings obtain ecstasy (ἔκστασις) [elevating themselves] from material realities to that which is more divine.⁴⁹

44 δι' ὧν γίνεται ἡ τῆς θείας αὐτῷ τραπέζης ἐτοιμασία καὶ ὅσα κατὰ τὸ ἀκόλουθον περιέχει ἡ ψαλμωδία· καὶ τὸ ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἔλαιον καὶ ὁ τοῦ ποτηρίου ἄκρατος, ὁ τὴν νηφάλιον μέθην ἀπεργαζόμενος, καὶ ὁ καλῶς αὐτὸν καταδιώκων ἔλεος καὶ ἡ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ θεοῦ μακροβίωσις. *Cant XII* (GNO VI 362,9–14).

45 Cf. H. Lewy, *Sobria ebrietas. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik*, Giessen 1929, 115–118; S. Burns, “Divine Ecstasy in Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Macarius: Flight and Intoxication”, *GOTR* 44 (1999) 309–327.

46 Cf. for example, Philo, *De fuga et inventione*, 167, 1 and *Legum allegoriarum* 1, 84, 3 (L. Cohn, *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, Vol. I and II, Berlin 1962).

47 Ch. Curzel, “Gli ossimori nelle Omelie sul Cantico dei cantici e nella Vita di Mosè di Gregorio di Nissa”, *Augustinianum* 51 (2011) 47–83.

48 Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie*, 25.

49 Οὕτω μοι νόησον καὶ τὴν κυπρίζουσαν ἄμπελον, ἥς ὁ μὲν οἶνος ὁ τὴν καρδίαν εὐφραίνειν πλη-

The sacramental reference to wine presents participation in the Eucharistic table as the path that culminates in the mystical experience of intoxication, good insofar as it is sober, and that produces ecstasy, that is, the continuous movement of union with God and of renouncing that which is ephemeral.⁵⁰ This implies a dynamic of growing without end in the participation in divine nature, which always remains beyond human capacity, insofar as it is not confined by any border (ὅτι οὐδενὸς περιέχεται ὅρου),⁵¹ but which constantly enlarges human capacity to welcome it. The soul is then attracted and driven to participation (μετουσίαν) in that immutable good that is superior to everything, in such a way that its desire grows in proportion to its progress.⁵²

All this does not imply any confounding of the Creator and the creature, nor that the radical ontological difference between God and man is blurred in the slightest. The union is real, and yet the indwelling never implies possession, but only personal relation:

[The soul] is stripped of that tunic of leather, the dirt is washed from her feet and does not re-wear that ugly and ragged garment, and no longer lays the sole of her foot on the ground. Therefore she hears His voice and obeys His command; she opens the door taking the veil of her heart away and moving the tent of the flesh away from the door. The door of the soul is opened for the King of Glory. But the wide space of the door proves to be a small opening, cramped and narrow, through which the Bridegroom cannot pass, to enter and touch she who wants to see Him, but only His hand, just barely. The bride thus only manages to know that the hand is that of He who she desires.⁵³

ρώσει ποτὲ τὸν τῆς σοφίας κρατῆρα καὶ προκείσεται τοῖς συμπόταις ἐκ τοῦ ὑψηλοῦ κηρύγματος κατ' ἐξουσίαν ἀρύεσθαι εἰς ἀγαθὴν τε καὶ νηφάλιον μέθην. ἐκείνην λέγω τὴν μέθην, δι' ἣς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ τῶν ὑλικῶν πρὸς τὸ θεϊότερον ἢ ἔκστασις γίνεται. *Cant* V (GNO VI 156,14–20).

50 We need to note that ecstasy was regarded negatively by Greek thought. Origen, faithful to the Platonic tradition, shared this position. The same can be said for the intoxication: read in the light of Gregory's thought, particularly interesting is the critique advanced by Plato (*Respublica* 363d) of the bliss described by Museus, connected to the Orphic mysteries: he who participates, devoting himself to wine, "considers eternal rapture the greatest reward of virtue" (ἡγησάμενοι κάλλιστον ἀρετῆς μισθὸν μέθην αἰώνιον).

51 Cf. *Cant* V (GNO VI 157,16).

52 Cf. *ibidem* 158,19–159,11.

53 ἀποδύεται τὸν δερμάτινον ἐκείνον χιτῶνα καὶ τὸν ῥύπον τῶν ποδῶν ἀπονίπτεται καὶ οὔτε τὸ εἶδε-
χθὲς καὶ ῥωγαλέον ἐκείνο ἱμάτιον πάλιν ἑαυτῇ περιτίθῃσιν οὔτε τῇ γῇ πρὸς τὸ λοιπὸν ἑναπερείδει
τὸ ἔχνος· ἤκουσεν οὖν αὐτοῦ τῆς φωνῆς καὶ τῷ προστάγματι πείθεται· ἀνοίγει τὴν θύραν περιελο-
μένη τῆς καρδίας τὸ κάλυμμα· διέσχε τῆς θύρας τὸ τῆς σαρκὸς παραπέτασμα· πάντα ἡνοίγη τῆς
ψυχῆς ἡ πύλη, ἵνα εἰσέλθῃ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξης. ἀλλ' ἡ τῆς πύλης εὐρυχωρία μικρά τις ἀπεδείχθη

The continuous sacramental references, like those to baptism in the rites of dressing and *discalceatio*,⁵⁴ reaffirm the dimension of ontological overflow and the following apophatism in terms of *kenosis*:

I believe, in fact, that “house of the bride” should be interpreted as the whole of human life and that the creating hand of each thing, dwelling within it (ἐνδημήσασαν), has contracted into the brevity and humility of man’s existence, while taking part in our nature “in every way, yet without sin” (Heb 4.15) and, coming to be among us, has caused shock and awe in souls. How is it possible that God is manifested in the flesh? And how is the *Logos* made flesh? How is there a birth in virginity and virginity in a mother? How is light joined to darkness and life mixed with death? How can the narrow opening of (human) life contain in itself the hand that encompasses all things, by which the whole heavens are measured and all earth and ocean is contained?⁵⁵

The awe, which is extended by the angels to the liturgical assembly of the Christians, is based on the perception of the divine infinitude’s authentic making itself present in the finitude of human nature. The greatness of the mystery is expressed through questions that constantly return to the paradox of the Creator giving Himself in the flesh and in the concrete life of the creature.

The connection between economy and immanence also has an intrinsic pneumatological dimension insofar as the movement of the divine gift is linked to the third Person, defined as *Glory* by Gregory, whom the Father and the Son eternally exchange and whom is poured out in the Church, leading it to unity. The symphony of the angels and human beings in the history of salvation and in the liturgy thus becomes the expression of the very immanence of God one and triune:

τρυμαλιά στενή και βραχεία, δι’ ἧς οὐκ αὐτός ὁ νυμφίος ἀλλ’ ἡ χεὶρ αὐτοῦ μόγις ἐχώρησεν, ὥστε δι’ αὐτῆς ἐπὶ τὸ ἐντός γενέσθαι καὶ ἄψασθαι τῆς ἐπιθυμούσης τὸν νυμφίον ἰδεῖν, ἢ τοσοῦτον ἐκέρδανε μόνον ὅσον γινῶναι ὅτι ἡ χεὶρ ἐκείνη τοῦ ποθομένου ἐστίν. *Cant XI* (GNO VI 332,20–333,11).

54 Cf. Daniélou, *Platonisme et Théologie*, 27–30.

55 οἶμαι γὰρ οἶκον νοεῖσθαι τῆς νύμφης πᾶσαν τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ζωὴν, ταύτῃ δὲ τὴν χεῖρα τὴν πάντων τῶν ὄντων ποιητικὴν ἐνδημήσασαν πρὸς τὸ βραχὺ τε καὶ οὐτιδανόν τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου βίου ἐαυτὴν συστεῖλαι διὰ τοῦ μετασχεῖν τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν Κατὰ πάντα καθ’ ὁμοιότητα χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας, ἐν ἡμῖν δὲ γενομένην θρόνησιν ἐμποιῆσαι καὶ ξενισμὸν ταῖς ψυχαῖς· πῶς ὁ θεὸς ἐν σαρκὶ φανεροῦται; πῶς ὁ λόγος γίνεται σὰρξ; πῶς ἐν παρθενίᾳ τόκος καὶ ἐν μητρὶ παρθενία; πῶς τῷ σκότει τὸ φῶς καταμίγνυται καὶ τῷ θανάτῳ ἡ ζωὴ κατακίρναται; πῶς χωρεῖ ἡ βραχεία τοῦ βίου τρυμαλιά τὴν περιεκτικὴν πάντων τῶν ὄντων χεῖρα ἐν ἐαυτῇ δέξασθαι, ἢ πᾶς ὁ οὐρανὸς ἐκμετρεῖται καὶ ἡ γῆ πᾶσα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ ἅπαν ἐμπεριέχεται. *Cant XI* (GNO VI 338,2–14).

It is better to textually cite the divine words of the Gospel: "So that all be one. As You Father, are in Me and I in You, that they be also one in Us" (Jn 17.21). And the bond of this unity is glory (τὸ δὲ συνδετικὸν τῆς ἐνότητος ταύτης ἡ δόξα ἐστίν). But no prudent person could oppose the fact that the Spirit is called "glory", if the words of the Lord are considered. For he says: "The glory that You gave Me I gave to them" (Jn 17.22). He gave, in fact, that glory to the disciples, saying to them "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20.22). He, having embraced human nature, received this glory that he already possessed forever, from before the world was made (cf. Jn 17.5). And, since this human nature was glorified by the Spirit, the communication of the glory of the Spirit happens to all who belong to the same nature (ἐπὶ πάντων τὸ συγγενές), starting with the disciples. For this he says: "And the glory that You gave Me, I gave to them, so that they be one like Us. I in them and You in Me, so that they be perfect in unity" (Jn 17.22–23).⁵⁶

In *Adversus Macedonianos* Gregory had described the hypostatic nature of the Holy Spirit as the regal power or the divine glory that the first two divine Persons eternally give to each other. In *In Canticum*, the Comforter is defined, thus, συνδετικόν, that is, link of union between the Father and the Son. The Paschal Mystery consists in the extension of this communion to the humanity assumed by the Son, in such a way that the divine glory can be revealed in the whole of human nature.

From this perspective, the history of salvation and the Church are presented under the sign of unity, like the exegesis of the parable of the Good Samaritan at the conclusion of *Homily XIV* shows.⁵⁷ The wounded man is all of humanity and anyone who stops to help him is Christ, who with his mount, the symbol of His Body, leads man to the dwelling of His love. Thus, the economy of salvation is carried out in the economy of the Church:

56 βέλτιον δ' ἂν εἴη αὐτάς ἐπὶ λέξεως παραθέσθαι τὰς θείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου φωνάς: "Ἵνα πάντες ἐν ὧσι καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ κάγω ἐν σοί, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐν ὧσιν. τὸ δὲ συνδετικὸν τῆς ἐνότητος ταύτης ἡ δόξα ἐστίν· δόξαν δὲ λέγεσθαι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον οὐκ ἂν τις τῶν ἐπισκευμένων ἀντεῖποι πρὸς αὐτάς βλέπων τὰς τοῦ κυρίου φωνάς· Τὴν δόξαν γάρ, φησὶν, ἦν ἔδωκάς μοι, ἔδωκα αὐτοῖς. ἔδωκε γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς τοῖς μαθηταῖς τοιαύτην δόξαν ὁ εἰπὼν πρὸς αὐτούς· Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον. ἔλαβε δὲ ταύτην τὴν δόξαν ἦν πάντοτε εἶχε πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον εἶναι ὁ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν περιβαλλόμενος, ἥς δοξασθεῖσις διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ἐπὶ πάντων τὸ συγγενές ἡ τῆς δόξης τοῦ πνεύματος διάδοσις γίνεται ἀπὸ τῶν μαθητῶν ἀρξαμένη. διὰ τοῦτο φησι· Τὴν δόξαν, ἦν ἔδωκάς μοι, ἔδωκα αὐτοῖς, ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν, καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἐν ἐσμεν· ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα ὧσι τετελειωμένοι εἰς τὸ ἐν. *Cant XV* (GNO VI 467,2–17).

57 Cf. *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 426,9–429,15).

And what is said below reveals through the word the economy of the Church. In fact, the first who were disciples of grace and became eye-witnesses of the Word did not lock that good inside themselves, but in communicating it evoked the same grace even in those who came after them. This is why the young women say to the bride, who first kissed the mouth of the Word, was filled with good, and was deemed worthy of the hidden mysteries: “With you we rejoice and exult” (Ct 1.4).⁵⁸

Already in *Homily 1* the theme that is developed in the last one is clearly present. The purpose of Gregory is to attract his listeners to the mystery of the transmission of grace, which is a gift that must be paid forward. Thus, the joy of the bride spreads to all of humanity and the entire cosmos, as shows the final commentary on Ct 5.10–16:

In fact all of these expressions, with which beauty is described, do not indicate the invisible and incomprehensible aspects of Divinity, but those aspects manifested in the economy, when He showed Himself on the earth and lived with humans, having assumed human nature; and through this human nature, according to the words of the Apostle (cf. Rm 1.20), one can also see His invisible aspects, which are understood through his works, insofar as they are manifested through the constitution of the universe of the Church. Creation of a universe is, in fact, the constitution of the Church.⁵⁹

Gregory, therefore, contemplates the Church in light of Christ and, therefore, in light of the Trinity. The perspective is not institutional, but cosmic. Gregory connects, in his conception, the history of salvation and the ecclesial dimension, insofar as the Church itself is the extension of the divine gift in the world

58 Ἡ δὲ ἐφεξῆς ῥήσις τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴν οἰκονομίαν ἐκκαλύπτει τῷ λόγῳ. οἱ γὰρ πρῶτοι μαθητευθέντες τῇ χάριτι καὶ αὐτόπται τοῦ λόγου γενόμενοι οὐκ ἐν αὐτοῖς τὸ ἀγαθὸν περιώρισαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς μετ' ἐκείνους ἐκ διαδόσεως τὴν αὐτὴν ἐνεποίησαν χάριν. διὰ τοῦτο πρὸς τὴν νύμφην φασὶν αἱ νεάνιδες τὴν πρῶτην διὰ τοῦ κατὰ στόμα γενέσθαι τοῦ λόγου τῶν ἀγαθῶν πληρωθεῖσαν καὶ τῶν κεκρυμμένων μυστηρίων ἀξιοθεῖσαν ὅτι Ἀγαλλιασώμεθα καὶ εὐφρανθώμεν ἐν σοί. *Cant 1* (GNO VI 40,13–21).

59 ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα, δι' ὧν ἡ τοῦ κάλλους γέγονεν ὑπογραφή, οὐ τῶν ἀοράτων τε καὶ ἀκαταλήπτων τῆς θεότητος ἐστὶν ἐνδεικτικά ἀλλὰ τῶν κατ' οἰκονομίαν φανερωθέντων, ὅτε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ὥφθη καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις συναναστράφη τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἐνδυσάμενος φύσιν, δι' ὧν κατὰ τὸν ἀποστολικὸν λόγον καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ τοῖς ποιήμασι νοούμενα καθοράται διὰ τῆς τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ κόσμου κατασκευῆς φανερούμενα. κόσμου γὰρ κτίσις ἐστὶν ἡ τῆς ἐκκλησίας κατασκευή. *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 384,13–21).

and in time. Its purpose is the communication to every man and woman of the real possibility of entering into the infinite movement of the *epektasis* through the sacraments that may put the human being in relation with the life of Christ:

I believe that with these words the text teaches that the person who desires to see God sees Him to which he or she aspires in constantly following Him, and that the contemplation of His face consists in the unceasing walk toward Him, which is carried out by closely following in the footsteps of the Word.⁶⁰

To see God means to follow Him by allowing oneself to be guided by the steps of Christ in that unceasing movement that is the very meaning of Gregory's whole commentary and the arrival point of his theological thought: The ascent, therefore, never ends, but proceeds from glory to glory (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν)⁶¹ because of the attraction of that desire that becomes a guide for the soul toward betterment (ὁδηγὸν πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον τὴν ἰδίαν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχειν), outside of every necessity or interest, but in the most absolute freedom of virtue, which knows no masters, is voluntary, and not subject to any necessity (ἀδέσποτον γὰρ ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἐκούσιον καὶ ἀνάγκης πάσης ἐλεύθερον).⁶²

Freedom is the thread that ties the exegesis of Gregory from the first homily to the last. For the free choice of those who enter into the *epektasis* through the *mimesis* of Christ takes the place of the necessity of carnal passion, which could follow a purely literal interpretation. In the interpretation of "I am of my beloved and my beloved is mine" in *Homily* xv, the bride is actually compared to a mirror who voluntarily decides to turn towards He who is the perfect Image of the Father.⁶³ In this way, through the sacraments and the liturgy, the bride is rendered capable of welcoming the bridegroom in herself in order to shine His light, in a way similar to what happens with the angels.⁶⁴

3.4 *Point of Arrival*

At the end of this synthetic journey, it can be recognized how Christian perfection is at the center of Gregory's attention. From the first moment, he seems

60 οἶμαι, διὰ τούτων ὁ λόγος ὅτι ὁ ἰδεῖν τὸν θεὸν ἐπιθυμῶν ἐν τῷ αἰεὶ αὐτῷ ἀκολουθεῖν ὁρᾷ τὸν ποθοῦμενον καὶ ἡ τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ θεωρία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀπαυστος πρὸς αὐτὸν πορεία διὰ τοῦ κατόπιν ἔπεσθαι τῷ λόγῳ κατορθουμένη, *Cant* XII (GNO VI 356,12–16).

61 Cf. *Cant* V (GNO VI 160,3).

62 Cf. *ibidem* 160,14–161,1.

63 Cf. *Cant* XV (GNO VI 439,3–442,9).

64 Cf. *ibidem* 442,10–446,10.

to take the Origenian subdivision of spiritual progress in three stages, to each of which would correspond one of the three books of the Holy Scriptures attributed to Solomon: the first stage of infancy would be associated with the book of Proverbs; the second phase of the inner life, that is, youth, would be connected to the book of Ecclesiastes; finally, the maturity of the soul would be in relation precisely with the *Song of Songs*. The latter work would correspond, therefore, to the properly contemplative moment.

Gregory, however, resumes this scheme, subverting the content.⁶⁵ In fact, he transports this subdivision of Origen into the context of the mystic of darkness.⁶⁶ Just as God spoke to Moses in the light, in the cloud, and in the darkness, so spiritual life would be characterized by three ways or phases. Only the first stage would correspond to a properly illuminating moment, in which purification gives clarity by freeing from the darkness of sin and restoring the divine image to the soul. This first stage would make divine knowledge possible *in speculum*, i.e. in the mirror of the soul, characteristic of the second way. Like entering into a cloud, we now lose clarity and prepare for contemplation of the hidden reality: the properly mystical order is accessed. The purification of the first phase thus allows for an increase in knowledge, which, however, is paradoxically given in obscurity and is based on the indwelling of the Trinity within the soul through grace.⁶⁷ This way leads to the darkness of the third stage: here we grasp that God infinitely transcends everything that is known of Him, here it is understood that He is incomprehensible, and that finding Him means searching without end. At every moment the capacity of the soul is filled and increased, proceeding continuously, from beginning to beginning, in participation and union.

This is precisely the *epektasis* that, insofar as it is a definitive of eternal movement, radically transforms the Origenian construction of the three moments of spiritual life: this subdivision actually loses value in the face of the constant growth indicated by the entrance into the darkness of the union.⁶⁸ This is con-

65 Cf. Daniélou, *Platonisme et Théologie*, 18.

66 Cf. Id., "Mystique de la ténèbre chez Grégoire de Nysse", in: M. Viller, s.J.—F. Cavallera—J. de Guibert (eds.), *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Ascétique et Mystique*, Vol. 2, Paris 1953, coll. 1872–1885.

67 Cf. Id., *Le IV^{me} siècle, Grégoire de Nysse et son milieu*, Notes prises par les élèves, Cours-Conference Fac. de Theol. de l'Institut Cath. de Paris, Paris 1965, 186.

68 Regarding the relationship between the comments on the *Song* of Origen and Gregory, F. Dünzl has written: "Theologische Emanzipation und Metamorphose dürfen Begriffe sein, die das Verhältnis der hom. in Cant. Gregors zur Canticum-Exegese des Origenes zutreffend charakterisieren" (F. Dünzl, "Die Canticum-Exegese des Gregors von Nyssa und des Origenes in Vergleich", *JAC* 36 [1993] 109).

firmed by Canévet who identifies the main source of the peculiarity of Gregory with respect to Origen in this doctrine of infinite progression.⁶⁹

Jean Daniélou also speaks of a "Copernican revolution,"⁷⁰ because the logic of possessing God is overcome: it is no longer simply God present in the soul, but it is also the soul itself present in God. The contemplation is carried out in the union, and the intellectual spirituality of the Origenian mold gives way to an ecstatic spirituality of love, in a wonderful fusion of possession and desire, stability and movement.

The *akolouthia* of Gregory's thought actually is based on the necessity of a radical transformation of Greek metaphysics implied by Trinitarian revelation: from the one finite ontological degree, structured in a scalar form with levels of being of perfection descending from the First Principle, the bishop of Nyssa moves to a framework characterized by two very distinct ontological degrees and an absolute *gap* between them that separates the Trinity, the only eternal and infinite nature, from creation, which is marked by temporality and finitude. This new metaphysical architecture implies at the epistemological level the introduction of apophatism, for which God is knowable only in the recognition of His unknowability.⁷¹ In Gregory's conception, exegesis and ontology are thus inseparable: the meaning of Holy Scripture, in fact, leads to a reinterpretation of the cosmos and history that concerns every human being, because it speaks of what truly is, i.e. of He who truly is and from Whom everything originates.

From the application of this perspective to the *Song*, it immediately results that the ultimate meaning of the revealed text is virtue, which is now re-semanticized in the above ontological framework that is radically different from the classical Greek approach. In fact, if for Aristotle, God cannot have virtues or faculties, insofar as they are connected to a potential dimension,⁷² for Gregory God is virtue itself, and not in the immanent stoic sense, but as the transcendent source of every virtue. The moral interpretation is, therefore, deeply rooted in ontology and transfigured by it.

Therefore, if the meaning of the revealed text can be grasped only in light of virtue rather than literally, the deepest content of it can be found only in Christ, just like it is only in the veil of His Humanity that the dazzling light of the sun

69 Cf. M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nyssa et l'herméneutique biblique*, Paris 1983, 130.

70 Cf. J. Daniélou, *Le IV^{me} siècle*, 187.

71 Cf. G. Maspero, *Essere e relazione*, Roma 2013, 166–187. On the epistemological difference between Gregory's and Eunomius' ontological architectures see X. Batllo, *Ontologie scalaire et polémique trinitaire. Le subodinationisme d'Eunome et la distinction $\kappa\tau\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\nu/\acute{\alpha}\chi\tau\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\nu$ dans le Contre Eunome I de Grégoire de Nyssa*, Münster 2013.

72 Cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nichomachea* 1178b.

of His Divinity becomes accessible. The allegory becomes a typology, under the influence of the new ontological conception concerning the exegetical act. In fact, a merely literal interpretation would mean the possibility of reaching truth with thought alone, just as recourse to the simple allegory would return to the deeper semantic level, but *per se* is accessible exclusively to the thought of a particularly intelligent reader. Rather, the typological exegesis is based in the first place on the self-giving of God in the flesh and in history. This therefore concerns an interpretive possibility that is radically based on the divine gift, and as such is available to all.

Thus, the whole succession of Gregory's interpretations of the different images of the *Song* is not univocal, nor does it aim at a typification or classification of Christian life, but it always returns to the *epektasis*, the true meaning of the text.⁷³ The relationship between man and God is, therefore, essentially dynamic, because on the one hand the creature is finite while the Creator is infinite but, on the other hand, He really enters into relation with man introducing him into His own unlimited Life. Christian salvation is, thus, defined in terms of growing desire and love, which are always accomplished and increasingly become capable of fulfillment.

This is immediately reflected in the sacramental life, because Gregory puts the three ways in relation with the three sacraments of Christian initiation, in an admirable synthesis characterized by the attention to the historical dimension and the spiritual dynamic. The first way, which is mainly illuminative, would correspond to baptism, thanks to which the old person is freed and becomes like a newborn baby. The second phase of spiritual growth is located in the sacrament of confirmation, while the culmination of perfection is reached with the Eucharist.⁷⁴ Consistently, just as the mystic vertex is the ever-growing union with God (in an infinite movement that is eternally sustained in glory), so the Eucharist, unlike baptism and confirmation, is the sacrament that is repeated and that carries out this union, in an already essentially eschatological dimension. This is why Daniélou stated that the spiritual theology of Gregory is an extension of his sacramental theology, just as we see in the exegetical commentaries.⁷⁵

73 This can explain the different reconstruction of the different stages in the spiritual ascent in H. Xia, *From Light to Light: An Investigation into the Role of the Light Imagery in Gregory of Nyssa's Spiritual Theology*, Ph.D. Thesis, Faculteit Theologie en Religiewetenschappen, KU Leuven 2014.

74 For an introduction to the theme of the relationship between the Eucharist and contemplation: M. Belda Plans, "Eucaristía y vida mística", in: AA.VV, *Diálogos de Teología 11: Condenados a la alegría*, Asociación Almudí, Valencia 2000, 179–198.

75 Cf. *ibidem*, 184. See also: E.D. Moutsoulas, *Γρηγόριος Νύσσης*, Athens 1997, 106.

4 Conclusion

This introduction sought to show how *In Canticum* does not seek a merely noetic result, but intentionally extends itself to the description of the Church, with its diverse members, and to the history of salvation, now ontologically connected to the human being's perfection. Gregory seems to seek with his commentary to attract his readers and listeners to the dynamic that characterizes the relation of God with every person. Human desire is fulfilled, in fact, not in the conceptual understanding, which indeed can become an obstacle shaping itself as an idol,⁷⁶ but in a personal union, which is transmitted from life into life, "from mouth to mouth,"⁷⁷ being introduced to that eternal movement "from glory into glory" in which perfection consists.

The point is not to identify phases or deduce necessary structures of man's spiritual dynamic, but to allow oneself to be guided by the continuous restarting that drives the exegesis of the Bishop of Nyssa, entirely aimed at the union with God. The very multiplicity of the exegetical readings of the same passage refers to the deeper meaning that is the *epektasis*. Going through the commentary, one almost has the impression that Gregory proceeds with an acute sense of irony, disassembling the pretext or illusion of having comprehended the target that from time to time seems to be unfolded to the intellectual comprehension of the reader, as a reminder of its being always in the *beyond* of God.

The interpretation of the *Song* proposed by Gregory is based, thus, on an ontological conception of the relationship between the Trinity and man drawn from the whole of the Holy Scriptures and, in particular, from the Trinitarian revelation disclosed in Christ. A literal reading would correspond, from this perspective, to a continuous ontological conception of the God-world relationship, typical of Greek metaphysics. Gregory's spiritual exegesis returns, rather, to the history of salvation as the sole way of reaching knowledge and union with the true God. Access to the Trinity is, in fact, possible only in the Word incarnate, through his Humanity and his corporeality, which is given in the sacraments and in the Church. Thus, the free mimesis of Christ, carried out in the liturgy and, thanks to it, in the moral life, discloses the possibility of the *epektasis* as stability in that disposition towards the face of God that characterizes angelic life. Man always remains distinct from his Creator, but already in terrestrial life, and increasingly in the fullness of glory, he or she grows without pause in the relation with Him. The invitation to spread the received gift, on the example

76 Cf. *Vit Moys*, II, 165,4–9 (GNO VII/1 87,23–88,5).

77 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 31,11 and 32,16).

of the bride in the *Song* and of Paul, is shown thus not as mere moral exhortation but as a realization of that form of purely relational life that characterizes heavenly beatitude.

In this way, Gregory's exegetical option seeks to interpret the Scriptures starting from an epistemology drawn from Scripture itself, as the interpretive method of Gregory returns to his ontological conception, from which apophatism follows on the epistemological level. In turn, from this descends the centrality of humanity in Christ and, therefore of the corporeal and historical dimension, to enter into union with God. Thus, the sacraments and the ecclesial organism constitute the authentic way to access the *epektasis* that makes one similar to the angels and, thus, blessed.

In the maturity of his thought, Gregory gathers the fruits of his dogmatic labor, painstakingly developed in the previous years in order to oppose Eunomius, Apollinarius, and the Pneumatomachians. In his commentary on the biblical poem, analogously to what happens with the *Exodus* for what concerns *De Vita Moysis*, the distinction between God and the world, the value of humanity also in its corporeal dimension, and the realism of the unity given to the Church by the Holy Spirit, converge in a deeply harmonious vision that, even with points of irony, is no longer presented as a conceptual synthesis, but continuously goes outside itself to encounter the one and triune Creator. The purpose of everything is to draw the baptized person, who is called to the truest holiness, to the free choice of this dynamic.

The same paradoxical dimension of Gregory's exegesis performs the task of guiding one toward an interpretation that puts at the center the dynamic of the *epektasis* disclosed to the Christian in liturgical life. The perfection is evident, therefore, as communion carried out thanks to the sacramental mimesis of Christ. The convergent exegesis of the whole text can be considered a Pauline reading of the *Song*, which brings together exegesis and ontology, progressively opening the horizon from the soul to the Church and, still yet, to the history of salvation. Thus the *epektasis*, which springs from the correspondence between the transcendence of God and the unknowability of His nature, is revealed as the true hermeneutic key of the reading of Gregory's interpretation of the *Song*, characteristic of his maturity, as is also seen in the definition of perfection contained in *De Vita Moysis*:

Perhaps the perfection of human nature consists precisely in the disposition (τὸ οὕτως ἔχειν) to always want to have more and more good.⁷⁸

78 τάχα γὰρ τὸ οὕτως ἔχειν, ὡς αἰεὶ ἐθέλειν ἐν τῷ καλῷ τὸ πλεόν ἔχειν, ἢ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως τελειότης ἐστί. *Vit Moys* I, 10,4–6 (GNO VII/1 5).

The *Commentary* on the *Song* seems, therefore, to constitute a magnificent exegetical proof of this hypothesis⁷⁹ offering what could be the ultimate word of Gregory, a somewhat novel “swan song”, according to the beautiful definition of Socrates in the *Phaedo*.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, the Cappadocian's exegesis is first of all deeply Pauline, not only due to the explicit references, but more still in the Semitic spirit, anchored to the *lema* of Mt 27.46 (or the equivalent *lama* of Mk 15.34) pronounced by Christ on the Cross: the *explanation* to which the theologian can have access in his exegesis is not primarily in the order of efficient causality, but final causality. The point is where God leads man. In this sense the theological *logos* for Gregory must be essentially open, radically willing to allow itself to be drawn and transformed in relation with God.⁸¹

Bibliography

- Batllo, X. *Ontologie scalaire et polémique trinitaire. Le subodinationisme d'Eunome et la distinction χριστόν/ἄχριστον dans le Contre Eunome 1 de Grégoire de Nysse*, Münster 2013.
- Belda Plans, M. “Eucaristía y vida mística”, in: AA.VV, *Diálogos de Teología 11: Condenados a la alegría*, Asociación Almudí, Valencia 2000, 179–198.
- Boersma, H. “Becoming Human in the Face of God: Gregory of Nyssa's Unending Search for the Beatific Vision”, *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 17 (2015) 131–151.
- Brugarolas, M. “Beauty and the Presence of God in the Soul: Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on Song of Songs 5:2”, in: J. Rutherford (ed.), *The Beauty of God's Presence in the Fathers of the Church. The Proceedings of the Eighth International Patristic Conference, Maynooth, 2012*, Dublin 2014, 128–149.
- Burns, S. “Divine Ecstasy in Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Macarius: Flight and Intoxication”, *GOTR* 44 (1999) 309–327.
- Cahill, J.B. “The Date and Setting of Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on the Song of Songs”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 32 (1981) 447–460.
- Canévet, M. *Grégoire de Nysse et l'herméneutique biblique*, Paris 1983.
- Cohn, L. *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, Vol. I and III, Berlin 1962.
- Cortesi, A. *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa. Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale*, Roma 2000.

79 Both Cahill and Dünzl believe *In Canticum* follows *De Vita Moysis*. See Dünzl, “Die Canticum-Exegese des Gregors von Nyssa und des Origenes in Vergleich”, 30–33.

80 Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 85b.

81 Reference is to *De vita Moysis*, and only as a background reference: these are typical themes in the time of Gregory's maturity.

- Curzel, Ch. "Gli ossimori nelle Omelie sul Cantico dei cantici e nella Vita di Mosè di Gregorio di Nissa", *Augustinianum* 51 (2011) 47–83.
- Daniélou, J. *Bible et liturgie*, Paris 1951.
- Daniélou, J. "Mystique de la ténèbre chez Grégoire de Nysse", in: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 11, Paris 1953, coll. 1882–1885.
- Daniélou, J. *Le IV^{me} siècle, Grégoire de Nysse et son milieu*, Notes prises par les élèves, Cours-Conference Fac. de Theol. de l'Institut Cath. de Paris, Paris 1965.
- Daniélou, J.—H. Musurillo, *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, Crestwood (NY) 1979.
- Dünzl, F. "Die Canticum-Exegese des Gregors von Nyssa und des Origenes in Vergleich", *JAC* 36 (1993) 94–109.
- Gargano, G.I. *La teoria di Gregorio di Nissa sul Cantico dei cantici: indagine su alcune indicazioni di metodo esegetico*, Roma 1981.
- Lewy, H. *Sobria ebrietas. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik*, Giessen 1929.
- Limone, V.—C. Moreschini (eds.). *Origene. Gregorio di Nissa. Sul Cantico dei Cantici*, Milano 2016.
- Maspero, G. *Essere e relazione*, Roma 2013.
- Moutsoulas, E.D. *Γρηγόριος Νύσσης*, Athens 1997.
- Pelletier, A.M. *Lectures du Cantique des Cantiques: de l'énigme du sens aux figures du lecteur*, Rome 1989.
- Spira, A. "Le temps d'un homme selon Aristote et Grégoire de Nysse: stabilité et instabilité dans la pensée grecque", in: *Colloques internationaux du CNRS*, Paris 1984, 283–294.
- Vinel, F. "Du commentaire biblique à l'affirmation dogmatique: l'expérience théologique au IV^e siècle", *Revue des sciences religieuses* 82 (2008) 161–177.
- Xia, H. *From Light to Light: An Investigation into the Role of the Light Imagery in Gregory of Nyssa's Spiritual Theology*, Ph.D. Thesis, Faculteit Theologie en Religiewetenschappen, KU Leuven 2014.

Struttura, funzione e genere letterario delle *Omellerie sul Cantico dei Cantici*

Claudio Moreschini

1 Contenuti, datazione e luogo

Le quindici *Omellerie sul Cantico dei Cantici* (un numero considerevole, rispetto alle altre del Nisseno dedicate ad un solo testo scritturistico) non commentano tutto il *Cantico* (terminano con Ct 6.8–9c), così come quelle *sull'Ecclesiaste* non commentano tutto l'*Ecclesiaste* (giungono fino a 3.13), a differenza di quanto si riscontra per le *Omellerie sulle Beatitudini* e per *La preghiera del Signore*.¹ Poiché le *Omellerie sul Cantico dei Cantici* e quelle *sull'Ecclesiaste* cominciano il loro commento dall'inizio del libro biblico, sembrano un'opera “incompiuta”, cioè interrotta ad un certo momento per il sopraggiungere di motivi sconosciuti: lo stesso Gregorio ammette² che la sua interpretazione spirituale (*theoria*) del *Cantico* era giunta solamente alla metà, e che forse si sarebbe dedicato anche al resto, se Dio gli avesse concesso il tempo e l'agevolezza della pace. Se però, come osserva Dünzl,³ la conclusione della quindicesima omelia è costituita da una presentazione dell'unità escatologica della natura umana, per cui è difficile immaginare che l'esegesi dovesse proseguire, dobbiamo supporre che il Nisseno non volesse terminare il suo “commento” al *Cantico*, ma pensasse che, giunto a quel punto, fosse opportuno fermarsi. Certo, l'omelia, su cui torneremo ancora, non richiedeva quella completezza “scientifica”, che a noi sembra necessaria, ma era legata alla opportunità del momento. Quindi un testo biblico poteva essere commentato per intero o anche in parte, se questo era ritenuto necessario.

La datazione delle *Omellerie sul Cantico* è oramai accertata: sono un'opera tarda, come si ricava dalla presenza, in esse, di motivi e di problematiche che si riscontrano nel *De vita Moysis*, che, appunto, fu scritto dal Nisseno alla fine della

1 Secondo Dörries, che considera usuale il numero di dodici, le omellerie XIII–XV sarebbero state aggiunte in un secondo momento (cf. H. Dörries, “Griechentum und Christentum bei Gregor von Nyssa”, *ThLZ* 88 (1963) 569–582, 572 ss.). Questa ipotesi sembra una *petitio principii*, e con ragione Dünzl la contesta (cf. Gregor von Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticatorum Homiliae. Homilien zum Hohenlied*. Erster Teilband, übersetzt und eingeleitet von F. Dünzl, Freiburg-Basel 1994, 36–38).

2 *Cant prol.* (GNO VI 13,18–21).

3 Cf. F. Dünzl, *Gregor von Nyssa. In Canticum Canticatorum Homiliae*, Freiburg-Basel 1994, 47.

sua vita: ad esempio, il parallelo tra la nube entro la quale Mosè, asceso alla montagna, “vide” Dio, e la tenebra, che è interpretata come simbolo dell’ignoranza che avvolge l’anima nella sua *epektasis* incessante,⁴ la descrizione della tenda dell’alleanza all’inizio della seconda omelia, analoga a quella interpretata nel *De vita Moysis*, etc. Più discussa è la questione di dove esse siano state effettivamente presentate le omelie. Daniélou riteneva che esse non fossero state pronunciate a Nissa, ma a Costantinopoli, in quanto le omelie che il Nisseno pronunciò nella sua sede episcopale hanno un carattere soprattutto morale, mentre quelle sul *Cantico* sarebbero caratterizzate soprattutto da interessi spirituali e ascetici.⁵ Questa ipotesi di Daniélou è stata contestata da J.B. Cahill,⁶ che osserva che, stando a quanto dice il predicatore nella introduzione,⁷ Olimpiade aveva pregato “a voce e per iscritto” Gregorio di interpretare il *Cantico*: quindi la richiesta era stata affidata ad una lettera, verisimilmente inviata da Costantinopoli (ove si trovava Olimpiade) a Nissa (dove si trovava Gregorio). Del resto, dopo il 385 Gregorio era diventato meno influente a Costantinopoli e probabilmente era tornato a risiedere stabilmente nella sua sede episcopale.

L’ipotesi che queste omelie siano sorte nell’ambiente di Nissa potrebbe ricevere un’ulteriore conferma dal fatto che Gregorio, sottolineando in un passo,⁸ il significato etico di Ct 5.13, che contiene un’esaltazione della verginità, rievoca il comportamento esemplare della vergine Tecla, che era un personaggio parti-

4 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 322,13–323,9). Non è, però, assolutamente specificato, se esse siano anteriori o posteriori al *De vita Moysis*; posteriori, e quindi dopo il 391, e forse anche dopo il 394, secondo Dünzl (cf. F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam: Die Auslegung Des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993, 32), secondo il quale (e credo con ragione) il *De vita Moysis* è anteriore alle *Omelie sul Cantico* (cf. F. Dünzl, “Gregor Von Nyssa’s Homilien Zum Canticum Auf Dem Hintergrund Seiner Vita Moysis”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 [1990] 371–381).

5 Cf. J. Daniélou, “La chronologie des œuvres de Grégoire de Nyse”, *Studia Patristica* 7 (1966) 159–169, 168.

6 Cf. J.B. Cahill, “The Date and Setting of Gregory of Nyssa’s *Commentary on the Song of Songs*”, *JThS* 32 (1981) 447–460, 450–453. Heine ripete esattamente le stesse cose di Cahill, che evidentemente non conosce (o conosce?) (Cf. R.E. Heine, “Gregory of Nyssa’s Apology for Allegory”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 [1984] 360–370); Dünzl conferma l’ipotesi relativa al luogo delle omelie (Nissa), cf. F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 33–34. Tale collocazione, comunque, è sostenuta anche da G. May, “Die Chronologie des Lebens und der Werke des Gregor von Nyssa”, in: M. Harl (éd.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nyse. Actes du colloque de Chevetogne (22–26 septembre 1969)*, Leiden 1971, 51–66, 64; P. Maraval, “Biography of Gregory of Nyssa”, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco – G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 101–116; F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 26; Id., *In Canticum Canticorum*, 25.

7 *Cant prol.* (GNO VI 3,3).

8 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 404,13–406,6).

colarmente venerato in Cappadocia e presente nella spiritualità di Gregorio Nazianzeno e dello stesso Nisseno (per Gregorio Nisseno, basti pensare alla identificazione tra Macrina e Tecla).⁹ La mirra, osserva Gregorio seguendo la tradizione cristiana, è simbolo della morte, per cui il passo di Ct 5,13 deve essere interpretato nel senso che la mirra, di cui ivi si parla, è il nome che è dato a coloro che sono puri ed emanano il profumo della virtù; la mirra, che è la morte spirituale, significa il disprezzo della vita materiale, mentre tutte le cose che sono ricercate quaggiù diventano morte per l'amore dei beni superni; una vergine e una asceta, come Tecla, aveva mani che stillavano questa mirra spirituale.

2 Il pubblico

Il pubblico dell'omiletica variava, logicamente, da una sede all'altra. R. MacMullen fa alcune brevi considerazioni sull'audience che seguiva Giovanni Crisostomo, e ritiene che gli ascoltatori fossero in grado di comprendere la sua retorica;¹⁰ l'audience era quindi composta di persone ricche, alle quali il predicatore contrapponeva i poveri, che non erano presenti alla sua predica e in favore dei quali parlava. Anche nella predicazione di Basilio e Gregorio Nazianzeno, è il ricco quello a cui il predicatore si rivolge. Gregorio Nazianzeno¹¹ sottolinea la ricchezza di "noi", cioè del predicatore e degli ascoltatori.¹² Del resto, in nessuna città la chiesa o le chiese erano materialmente in grado di accogliere in un'unica volta un'ampia minoranza del totale della popolazione residente: solamente un uditorio selezionato poteva recarsi nella chiesa. Inoltre erano sempre gli stessi strati socioeconomici che andavano alle prediche: i predicatori avevano davanti a sé la leadership della città, gli strati sociali più alti, accompagnati dai loro schiavi.¹³ Se le donne erano presenti, esse dovevano essere in un numero molto minore degli uomini o, di solito, non ci si rivolgeva a loro direttamente. Nel complesso, dunque, si trattava di una audience composta dalle classi superiori. Se è attestata la presenza di donne

9 Cf. C. Moreschini, "The Cult of Thecla in Cappadocia", in: J.W. Barrier – J.N. Bremmer – T. Nicklas – A. Puig i Tàrrach (eds.), *Thecla: Paul's Disciple and Saint in the East and West*, Leuven 2017, 1–16.

10 Cf. R. MacMullen, "The Preacher's Audience (AD 350–400)", *JThS* 40 (1989) 503–511. Molto brevemente, come si vede.

11 Gregorio Nazianzeno, *Oratio* 14, 14 (PG 35,877).

12 Cf. *ibidem* 507.

13 Cf. *ibidem* 510.

nel pubblico di Giovanni Crisostomo,¹⁴ altrettanto possiamo immaginare che avvenga (anche se non abbiamo indicazioni precise) per il pubblico di Gregorio di Nissa.

Questa contrapposizione tratteggiata dal MacMullen ci appare, tuttavia, molto schematica. Basilio in una sua omelia sui sei giorni della creazione¹⁵ si scusa della difficoltà di quanto sta dicendo e Bernardi si meraviglia che in una piccola città come Cesarea della gente comune possa seguire i difficili insegnamenti contenuti in quelle omelie.¹⁶ Del pubblico che seguiva Basilio ci parla anche Gregorio di Nissa, nell'introduzione alla sua *Spiegazione dell'Esamerone*, in un passo che ora citeremo: a maggior ragione il problema si pone per le *Omelie sul Cantico*, presentate in una città, come Nissa, che era ancora più piccola di Cesarea. Per scusare il fatto che le omelie del fratello non avevano una forma omogenea, ma erano caratterizzate da argomenti ora difficili ora semplici, Gregorio riferisce che Basilio, parlando davanti a un popolo numeroso, in una chiesa affollata, era costretto a presentare una spiegazione che si adattasse alla mentalità dei suoi ascoltatori. Molti erano anche quelli che potevano intendere parole più difficili; ma molto più numerosi quelli che non erano in grado di seguire un'indagine più sottile, gente semplice e manovali occupati in lavori umili, e il gran numero delle donne, non esercitate in tali dottrine, e lo sciame dei bambini e quelli di età avanzata: tutti costoro avevano bisogno di un parlare come quello di Basilio, per poter apprendere come conoscere il creatore dell'universo. Basilio infatti si era dedicato completamente all'esegesi più semplice delle parole del testo sacro, sì da presentare una spiegazione conveniente alla semplicità dei suoi ascoltatori: così era inteso dalla maggior parte di essi ed era ammirato dai più intelligenti.

A nostro parere, la predicazione di Gregorio si svolge su due livelli, che non possono essere facilmente separati l'uno dall'altro. La stessa polemica antiletteralista, contenuta nel prologo, ben si adatta ad un pubblico che è lontano dalle finzze esegetiche origeniane e spiritualiste. È a questo pubblico, per aiutarlo in una retta comprensione del testo, che si rivolge Gregorio, e non solo – ma per i motivi opposti – ad Olimpiade.¹⁷ Caratterizza inoltre un uditorio più vasto la necessità che certe espressioni del testo sacro siano adeguatamente spiegate

14 Cf. *ibidem* 508 n. 11.

15 *Hex* IV 2, PG 44,80D.

16 Cf. J. Bernardi, *La prédication des Pères Cappadociens: Le prédicateur et son auditoire*, Paris 1968, 50.

17 Non ci sembra che si possa affermare che Gregorio si rivolga ai catecumeni, come pure è stato supposto (cf. A. Cortesi, *Le omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa*, Roma 2000, 9–22), per il solo fatto che sottolinea con insistenza la necessità di un continuo miglioramento spirituale.

e presentate in maniera semplice. Anche l'interesse per le vicende romanzesche di Tecla, particolarmente venerata in Cappadocia, di cui abbiamo detto sopra, vicende che si trovano narrate negli *Acta Pauli et Theclae*, può essere una indicazione di quello che piaceva al pubblico di Gregorio. Da quegli *Acta* Gregorio ha tratto quello che più era sentito come apprezzabile e valido nella società e nella spiritualità dei suoi tempi: la verginità, il coraggio di fronte alla morte, la energia virile di Tecla, la sua indipendenza intellettuale. Alcune interpretazioni, invece, rivelano una notevole finezza: con esse Gregorio si rivolge agli strati intellettualmente più elevati. Il loro livello culturale era certamente buono, se erano in grado di comprendere certe difficili dottrine (che Gregorio, comunque, semplificava, come vedremo poi) e certe raffinatezze letterarie (impiego di parole e di reminiscenze poetiche).¹⁸ Di conseguenza, l'omelia appare rivolta ad un pubblico "medio",¹⁹ inoltre, esso poteva essere vario sia nella sua totalità, sia quello presente nell'ascolto di una singola omelia.

Un'omelia deve, quasi di necessità, essere legata alla situazione contingente, alla quale fa frequenti riferimenti in funzione didascalica. La polemica contro gli ecclesiastici accomuna queste *Omellerie* alla *Vita di Mosè*. Coloro che dovrebbero essere maestri del popolo, afferma il Nisseno, abbandonano il loro compito, che è quello di essere "occhi della Chiesa" e di stare seduti "presso le acque abbondanti",²⁰ e preferiscono stare seduti presso i fiumi di Babilonia (inversione dell'immagine del Ps 136.1).²¹ Questi maestri mancati desiderano quell'acqua che facilmente si disperde dalle cisterne forate, e quindi quello che è vano e ingannevole: gli onori, la potenza e la gloria, per la quale si affanna la maggior parte degli uomini, svaniscono non appena nascono. Altrove il predicatore osserva che i fedeli non sono dediti all'ascesi, come dovrebbero, ma alla ricerca delle ricchezze e dei falsi valori della vita sociale,²² come il voler piacere agli uomini, il cercare il guadagno e la gloria, il considerare solamente l'apparenza, il volgere alla ricerca del lusso e dei propri godimenti quanto è stato preparato da Dio perché noi mettiamo in pratica i suoi comandamenti. Ha funzione didascalica l'attirare l'attenzione degli ascoltatori sui peccati della società in cui essi stessi vivono,²³ o la descrizione delle passioni della società

18 G. May ("Die Chronologie", 64) ritiene, infatti, che il pubblico fosse composto non tanto dalla comunità cristiana di Nissa, quanto dai monaci di Nissa stessa e dei suoi dintorni, ai quali Gregorio invia le lettere 6,18 e 24.

19 Così F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 26.

20 Ct 5,12.

21 Cant XIII (GNO VI 398,7-17).

22 Cant XIV (GNO VI 407,12 ss.).

23 Cant II (GNO VI 58,13 ss.).

contemporanea²⁴ e del modello della vita eremitica,²⁵ a cui Gregorio era interessato negli ultimi anni della sua vita.²⁶

3 Struttura ed elaborazione letteraria

Un approfondimento sulla omiletica cristiana come genere letterario manca tuttora. Lo studio di J. Bernardi, meritorio nel suo tentativo (il primo tentativo) di esaminare globalmente l'omiletica dei Cappadoci, è dedicato più ai problemi storici e contenutistici che agli aspetti letterari e retorici.²⁷ Un breve contributo di A. Spira prende in considerazione solamente un tipo particolare di omiletica, quella del "discorso religioso".²⁸ Successivamente Françoise Vinel ha rivolto la sua attenzione anche agli aspetti letterari ed omiletici (nel caso delle *Omélies sull'Ecclesiaste*), ponendo l'attenzione sia sullo stile omiletico sia, più in particolare, sulle ripetizioni che esso comporta.²⁹ Uno specialista come Mosshammer ha tracciato una breve sintesi delle omelie del Nisseno, escludendo, però, quelle più importanti.³⁰

Il metodo di composizione, seguito dal Nisseno per le *Omélies sul Cantico*, è descritto da lui stesso:³¹ il primo abbozzo fu esposto nella chiesa, ma probabilmente ampliato sul momento; gli stenografi registrarono in quell'occasione il testo orale, e su questa registrazione l'autore intervenne ancora, in seguito, per dare alla sua omelia la redazione definitiva.³² Rimane incerto se la rielaborazione abbia modificato sostanzialmente l'omelia: a nostro parere, questo è verosimile.

24 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 344,13 ss.).

25 *Cant VII* (GNO VI 222,13 ss.).

26 In questo passo sarebbe contenuto un riferimento a Basilio, secondo Langerbeck, ma può essere qualcosa di più generale; l'interesse di Gregorio alla vita eremitica negli ultimi anni della sua vita è divenuto noto dopo che Langerbeck pubblicò la sua edizione (GNO VI, 1960).

27 Cf. J. Bernardi, *La prédication des Pères Cappadociens. Le predicateur et son auditoire*, Paris 1969.

28 Cf. A. Spira, "Volkstümlichkeit und Kunst in der griechischen Väterpredigt des 4. Jahrhunderts", *JÖB* 35 (1985) 55–73, soprattutto 65–70, per quanto riguarda il genere letterario. Ma è certo che si richiederebbero ricerche molto più ampie ed approfondite.

29 Cf. F. Vinel, *Grégoire de Nysses, Homélies sur l'Ecclesiaste*, SC 416, Paris 1996, 25, 38.

30 Cf. A.A. Mosshammer, "Gregory of Nyssa as Homilist", *Studia Patristica* 37 (2001) 212–239.

31 *Cant prol.* (GNO VI 13,9–20).

32 Abbondanza di dettagli in F. Dünzl, *Brut und Bräutigam*, 17–23. È da credere che questo metodo sia stato applicato comunemente.

Ogni omelia ha un suo proemio: alcuni sono particolarmente ampi, come quello alla dodicesima omelia; quello alla prima introduce all'argomento da trattare; quello alla quindicesima fa riferimento ad altri temi significativi. Generalmente all'inizio di un'omelia l'oratore ripete e riassume quanto aveva detto nelle omelie precedenti, prima di passare all'argomento successivo. Continua, anche all'interno di un'omelia, è la ripetizione dei temi principali, come quello dell'*epektasis* e quello della simbologia della sposa e dello sposo; analoga funzione hanno anche le riprese di quanto era stato detto in precedenza e il ritorno all'argomento da discutere, all'interno del testo: "Ma riprendiamo daccapo, ricapitolando il pensiero contenuto in queste parole";³³ "Ma ritorniamo all'argomento che ci è stato proposto".³⁴ Caratteristica di queste omelie, più che di altre del Nisseno, è la ripetizione in forma parafrastica, che contiene un primo inizio di esegesi, da sviluppare poi, dei vari versetti del *Cantico*: Gregorio prima cita il testo, poi lo ripete con parole proprie, già cominciando ad adattarlo alla sua spiegazione di carattere spirituale.³⁵

La forma orale è manifestata anche dalle domande rivolte ai personaggi del testo (in particolare allo sposo e alla sposa), come in XII;³⁶ dalle esortazioni al pubblico presente, con il passaggio dalla terza persona indefinita alla prima persona plurale (ad esempio, esortazioni alla purezza³⁷); dalle esclamazioni:³⁸

Oh libera parola, oh anima nobile e munifica, che supera ogni vetta di magnificenza! Chi accoglie a banchettare con i suoi frutti? A chi prepara un ricco pasto con i suoi beni? Chi chiama a mangiare le vivande imbandite?

Questo aspetto manifestamente colloquiale manca nelle omelie, letterariamente più elaborate, di Gregorio Nazianzeno, il quale è molto più distaccato dall'uditorio.

L'aspetto fortemente oratorio permette, all'occasione, l'elaborazione letteraria, talora particolarmente accentuata: l'omelia è considerata alla stregua del *logos* sofistico dell'epoca – qui il confronto con Gregorio Nazianzeno torna possibile. Manifestano questa elaborazione soprattutto le *ekphraseis*, particolare

33 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 366,10).

34 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 347,6).

35 Questa sarebbe una prassi propria della esegesi antiochena, secondo Dünzl (*Braut und Bräutigam*, 43); tuttavia, essa è da escludersi in queste omelie, per evidenti ragioni.

36 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 361,16–17).

37 *Cant I* (GNO VI 25,12–26,10).

38 *Cant X* (GNO VI 303, 6–9).

tipico della conferenza sofistica, come quella sulla tenda della testimonianza;³⁹ sull'inverno e la primavera;⁴⁰ sulla bellezza dell'universo.⁴¹ Tali abbellimenti letterari hanno la funzione di ottenere la persuasione dell'ascoltatore. "De ce fait ces images prennent une certaine autonomie et ne sont plus toujours enfermées dans la contrainte d'un système syntaxique".⁴²

4 Intenti didattici

L'omelia è un testo didascalico per eccellenza, e l'insegnamento comprende spesso anche argomenti che hanno un rapporto molto tenue con il testo biblico, ma che è necessario spiegare agli ascoltatori, a causa della loro estrazione sociale, che può essere umile, e della formazione culturale, che può essere semplice. Pertanto si trovano frequentemente nozioni di scienza popolare, che di solito introducono e comunicano un significato etico, istituendo un confronto tra il contenuto del testo biblico e l'ideale a cui si vuole incoraggiare l'ascoltatore. Non meraviglia, quindi, che Gregorio ricorra all'esempio che gli forniscono gli animali:⁴³ si tratta di una scienza che noi consideriamo popolare, ma che tale non era nel mondo antico; i riferimenti ad essi derivano quasi sempre da testi pagani (ad esempio da Aristotele o da opere di zoologia), ma normalmente questi testi sono dei manuali. A questo proposito Dünzl osserva che Gregorio è più ricco di dettagli che non Origene⁴⁴ – ma questo è dovuto, appunto, al fatto che i generi letterari sono differenti: Gregorio pronunciò delle omelie, con uno stile parlato, Origene elabora un commento, che è estraneo allo stile colloquiale.⁴⁵

Alcuni esempi. A proposito dell'airone Gregorio osserva⁴⁶ che questo uccello per una necessità di natura ha in odio il congiungimento fisico e stride e

39 *Cant II* (GNO VI 43–44).

40 *Cant V* (GNO VI 146,4–147,20), ove Gregorio ricorre all'impiego di parole poetiche.

41 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 334–337). Su questo problema si legga il contributo di Morwenna Ludlow, *The Rhetoric of Landscape in Gregory of Nyssa's Homilies on the Song of Songs*.

42 Cf. F. Vinel, *Grégoire de Nyse, Homélies sur l'Ecclésiaste*, 47.

43 Ci si potrebbe domandare se Gregorio di Nissa si sia servito solamente di fonti profane o non anche del *Physiologus*, che era conosciuto in oriente già dal quarto secolo e fu impiegato in occidente da Ambrogio e Rufino.

44 Cf. F. Dünzl, *In Canticum Canticorum Homiliae*, 54.

45 Sui rapporti, di dipendenza e di indipendenza, di Gregorio Nisseno rispetto ad Origene, cf. F. Dünzl, "Die Canticum-Exegese des Gregor von Nyssa und des Origenes im Vergleich", *JAC* 36 (1993) 94–109.

46 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 111,7).

si ribella per mostrare il suo dispiacere. Perciò il testo biblico quando parla dell'airone indica in simbolo la purezza. Analogo è quanto Gregorio dice per la tortora,⁴⁷ derivando da Origene:⁴⁸ la notizia di carattere popolare serve come esortazione alla castità. Il capriolo⁴⁹ distrugge le belve feroci e mette in fuga i serpenti con il suo alito e con l'aspetto tutto particolare della sua pelle.⁵⁰ Per questo motivo il Logos è stato paragonato ad un cerbiatto, in quanto calpesta e distrugge la superbia dei nemici. L'ape⁵¹ è simbolo della Sapienza: colui che vuole imparare la sapienza deve andare a scuola dell'ape.⁵²

Sulla base di Ct 2.9 ("balzando al di sopra dei monti, oltrepassando di un balzo i colli"), il Nisseno paragona (certo, arbitrariamente) questo "balzo" dello Sposo al comportamento della gazzella (δορκάς). E poiché la gazzella ha la vista acuta, come indica il suo nome, che deriva dal verbo δέρκομαι, così il Logos vede (θεάομαι) tutte le cose, e quindi è θεός.⁵³ L'identificazione è giustificata dal fatto che lo Sposo divino non è altri che il Logos.

Analoga funzione didascalica hanno i riferimenti alle piante e ai fiori: il cipresso e il cedro;⁵⁴ il giglio;⁵⁵ il melo;⁵⁶ tutti questi alberi racchiudono il "mistero" della purezza. La melagrana, dura nella buccia e astringente, ma poi gradevole al gusto,⁵⁷ simboleggia la virtù della continenza: questo particolare riconduce le *Omellerie sul Cantico* alle considerazioni della contemporanea *Vita di Mosè*.⁵⁸

Le virtù di altre piante sono presentate facendo riferimento agli insegnamenti degli esperti. Ct 4.14 elenca tutti gli alberi profumati che possano rap-

47 Cant III (GNO VI 79,1 ss.).

48 Origene, *Commentarium In Canticum* II 7,8; p. 155,16–20. Cf. le annotazioni di Baehrens, *ad locum*; Langerbeck aggiunge anche Aristot. *Historia Animalium* 613a14: "la tortora e la colomba selvatica hanno sempre lo stesso maschio, e non permettono ad un altro di avvicinarsi a loro".

49 Cant V (GNO VI 143,6 ss.).

50 Cf. Plin., *nat. hist.* VIII 118.

51 Secondo Pr 6.8ac.

52 Cant IX (GNO VI 269,1).

53 Cant V (GNO VI 141,8–15). Questa, come si sa, è una dottrina essenziale per la concezione trinitaria di Gregorio e per il suo tentativo di spiegare il nome "Dio", che può essere applicato a ciascuna Persona. È, quindi, un nome di genere, non un nome proprio (cf. *Abl* [GNO III/1 44,10–16 ss.]; più approfonditamente G. Maspero, *Trinity and Man. Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabium*, Leiden – Boston 2007). Ma come non osservare la semplicità dell'accenno omiletico all'approfondimento del trattato?

54 Cant IV (GNO VI 109,7 ss.; III,12 ss.).

55 Cant (GNO VI 114,3 ss.).

56 Cant IV (GNO VI 116,3 ss.).

57 Cant VII (GNO VI 230,11).

58 *Vit Moys* II, 192–193 (GNO VII/1, 99).

presentare il profumo della sposa. Il significato simbolico del croco⁵⁹ è presentato dal Nisseno in modo non stringente, lasciando anche ai suoi ascoltatori la scelta se accettarlo o no. Poiché possiede tre calici uniti tra di loro, il suo fiore potrebbe simboleggiare la Trinità. La cannella “supera (si dice) tutte le altre piante per profumo, sì che la Legge la prende per indicare il profumo sacerdotale (cf. Ex 30.23)”.⁶⁰ Il cinnamomo possiede numerosi e incredibili effetti (una citazione più lunga dà un’idea più chiara dell’insegnamento di Gregorio a questo proposito).⁶¹

Accanto alle notizie sulle piante Gregorio fornisce al suo uditorio anche informazioni sulle scienze. Anche in questo caso Gregorio si basa su quanto dicono gli esperti del corpo umano⁶² per insegnare come si forma nell’occhio la visione delle cose. Una scienza è anche quella della pittura,⁶³ che insegna come si debbano mescolare i vari colori per ottenere un ritratto, nel quale i colori stessi non sono più nettamente separabili tra di loro, ma tutti concorrono a produrre un’immagine.

La scienza più nobile è, come è logico, quella della medicina, che non può mancare in un testo così fortemente didascalico, ma che aveva avuto una sua funzione già nelle precedenti *Omèlie sull’Ecclesiaste*. Come osserva François Vinel,⁶⁴ il sapere filosofico ed il sapere medico erano considerati analoghi e connessi tra di loro. Alcune correnti filosofiche (ad esempio lo stoicismo) utilizzano l’analogia con la medicina per approfondire il rapporto tra anima e corpo e per definire le malattie dell’anima in parallelo con le malattie del corpo.⁶⁵ Anche le *Omèlie sull’Ecclesiaste* mostrano che Gregorio conosce la medicina;⁶⁶ nelle *Omèlie sul Cantico* la scienza della medicina spiega il cuore e la sua funzione;⁶⁷ il collo, la trachea, l’osso, le spalle.⁶⁸

59 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 284,16–285,14).

60 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 286,1–2).

61 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 286,9–15).

62 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 105,11 ss.) e anche *Cant VII* (GNO VI 218,17).

63 *Cant I* (GNO VI 28,7 ss.): κατὰ τὴν γραφικὴν ἐπιστήμην.

64 Cf. F. Vinel, “Introduction”, *Grégoire de Nysse. Homélies sur l’Ecclésiaste*, SC 416, Paris 1996, 43 ss.

65 La frequenza degli esempi desunti dalla medicina, osserva Vinel, ha fatto pensare che Gregorio avesse ricevuto una educazione in questa disciplina. M. Aubineau, *Grégoire de Nysse, De la virginité*, SC 119, Paris 1966, 47, parla addirittura di una istruzione pratica di Gregorio nella medicina. Io non sarei incline ad accettare l’ipotesi di una formazione medica: quelle presentate da Gregorio mi sembrano notizie molto popolari e semplici.

66 Ad esempio *Eccl VI 7* (GNO V 383–384): “i medici dicono che [...]”.

67 *Cant III* (GNO VI 94,12).

68 *Cant VII* (GNO VI 233–235).

5 Filosofia e teologia

Come conseguenza del genere letterario specifico, anche i vari motivi della teologia e filosofia di Gregorio sono presentati nella forma appropriata, quella dell'omiletica. Vi è una differenza tra il trattato, rivolto a persone competenti, e l'omelia, rivolta ad un pubblico vario, anche di non competenti o addirittura di ignoranti.⁶⁹ Di conseguenza, in queste omelie Gregorio presenta le sue concezioni (quasi tutte le sue più importanti e significative) in forma essenzialmente orale.

Prendiamo in considerazione, a questo proposito, alcuni dei motivi essenziali del pensiero di Gregorio, omettendo, naturalmente, quelli più ovvi.⁷⁰

5.1 *Dottrine di carattere teologico-filosofico*

Dopo alcuni altri tentativi che si riscontrano nelle opere precedenti, Gregorio esordisce nel proemio alla sesta omelia proponendo una divisione dei due piani della realtà, ricorrendo ad un linguaggio platonico:⁷¹ da una parte vi è la sostanza sensibile e materiale, dall'altra la sostanza intellegibile e immateriale. Di queste due, quella intellegibile è infinita e illimitata, l'altra è compresa entro certi confini, quali la quantità, la qualità, il peso, la figura, la superficie e la forma; invece la sostanza intellegibile e immateriale è illimitata. Ancora, la sostanza intellegibile è increata e creatrice, è sempre uguale a se stessa, non ammette alcuna diminuzione del bene; l'altra, invece, è stata creata. Ma quello che è nuovo, in questa distinzione della realtà, tracciata da Gregorio, è l'affermazione – chiaramente determinata dalla dottrina, tipica di queste omelie,

69 Invece secondo Canévet abbiamo a che fare con una teologizzazione dei motivi spirituali del *Cantico* (cf. M. Canévet, "Exégèse et théologie dans les traités spirituelles de Grégoire", in: M. Harl [éd.], *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nyssa. Actes du colloque de Chevetogne (22–26 septembre 1969)*, Leiden 1971, 144–168). Questa interpretazione di Canévet rende inevitabile ridurre le omelie ad una notevole astrattezza, osserva giustamente Dünzl, *In Canticum Canticatorum Homiliae*, 60. Secondo Canévet, è frequente che un versetto del *Cantico* sia un pretesto per l'insegnamento teologico – sì, ma che tipo di insegnamento? Di tipo "scientifico" o omiletico? L'aspetto omiletico di queste spiegazioni è indicato anche da Laird (cf. M. Laird, "Under Solomon's tutelage: the education of desire in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*", in: S. Coakley [ed.], *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Oxford 2003, 77–95, 80). Secondo Laird, tuttavia, la prima omelia ha una funzione più vicina a quella del commento vero e proprio.

70 Ad esempio: la bellezza dell'universo ci permette di ascendere alla conoscenza di Dio; la virtù è il giusto mezzo tra due tipi di malvagità contrapposti (*Cant IX* [GNO VI 284,5 ss.]).

71 Cf. A.A. Mosshammer, "The Created and the Uncreated in Gregory of Nyssa *Contra Eunomium I* 270–295 (GNO I, 105–113)", in: M. Brugarolas (ed.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium I. An English Translation with Supporting Studies*, Leiden 2018, soprattutto 402–404.

della continua ascesa verso Dio, ascesa che non ha limiti – che “anche questa sostanza può essere considerata, in un certo senso, illimitata, perché non si riesce a scorgere un limite né si può tracciare un confine alla sua crescita nel bene, ma continuamente quello che è il suo bene presente, per quanto grande e perfetto esso sembri essere, è l’inizio del bene maggiore che è al di sopra”.⁷²

Un altro elemento su cui Gregorio insiste particolarmente è quello della insufficienza dei nomi di Dio a manifestarne la natura: essi quindi costituiscono una preparazione e una giustificazione dell’apofatismo, come Gregorio ha affermato fin dai tempi del *Contra Eunomio*.⁷³ Questa impossibilità è implicita nelle parole del *Cantico*:⁷⁴ “unguento diffuso è il tuo nome”, delle quali il Nisseno propone una interpretazione innovativa: il nome di Dio è qualcosa di “diffuso”, cioè, un unguento che ha perso, diffondendosi, la sua essenza intima.⁷⁵

Con queste parole, mi sembra, infatti, che il testo alluda al seguente significato, e cioè che non è possibile circoscrivere con esattezza per mezzo del significato di un nome la natura illimitata, ma che ogni potenza di pensieri, ogni affermazione di parole e di nomi, anche se apparentemente posseggono una grandezza confacentesi alla natura di Dio, non possono, per loro natura, toccare quello che veramente è,⁷⁶ ma la nostra ragione congettura qualcosa su quell’essere, che è ignoto, seguendo solamente delle orme, se così si possono chiamare, e dei barlumi, e immagina l’incomprensibile per via di analogia, basandosi su quello che riesce a comprendere. Qualunque nome escogitiamo, dice il testo, che ci faccia conoscere il profumo della natura divina, non serve a indicare, per mezzo del significato di quanto stiamo dicendo, l’unguento stesso, ma le parole della nostra teologia indicano solamente un misero residuo di quanto è esalato dal buon odore divino. [...] Questo è, dunque, l’insegnamento che noi ricaviamo da tali parole, vale a dire, che il vero profumo della natura divina, che cosa mai esso sia per sua natura, è al di sopra di ogni nome e di ogni pensiero, mentre le meraviglie che si ammirano nell’universo forniscono la materia dei nomi della teologia: per mezzo di essi noi diciamo

72 *Cant* VI (GNO VI 173,5 ss.; 174,11–13). Questa è la base razionale della dottrina della *epektasis*, su cui si basano queste *Omèlie*.

73 Cf. *Eun* I 568–574 (GNO I 190,16–192,8); *Eun* I 617–623 (GNO I 204,18–206,6); *Eun* II 42 ss. (GNO I 238); *Ref Eun* 124 ss. (GNO II 365–366).

74 *Ct* 1,3.

75 *Cant* I (GNO VI 36,15–38,2).

76 Definizione platonizzante, normale nella Scuola di Alessandria e nei Cappadoci.

che Dio è sapiente, potente, buono, santo, beato ed eterno, giudice e salvatore, e altre qualità del genere. Tutto questo indica solamente una qualità, esigua, del profumo divino, una qualità che tutta la creazione reca impregnata in sé, come se fosse un vaso di profumo, per mezzo delle meraviglie che noi osserviamo in essa.⁷⁷

Questo passo è significativo anche perché introduce il concetto di analogia nella conoscenza dei nomi di Dio. Non ci basta considerare le bellezze della natura (il profumo proveniente dall'unguento versato), per conoscere l'esistenza di Dio: l'esistenza e le attività di Dio si apprendono mediante l'analogia con quello che si vede nel mondo.⁷⁸

Sulla impossibilità che si possano trovare i "nomi di Dio" Gregorio si sofferma altre volte, sempre impiegando i versetti del *Cantico* in chiave apofatica, e quindi non con un atteggiamento razionale e "filosofico".⁷⁹ Un altro esempio di teologia negativa si trova in XII,⁸⁰ ove vengono negate tutte le possibilità di definire la natura divina: l'uomo cerca Dio, ma non può trovarlo, perché Dio è trascendente. Anche in questo caso, è un versetto del *Cantico* che sta alla base ("Lo cercai e non lo trovai"⁸¹), più che la dottrina platonica (considerata troppo filosofica?).

È, quindi, significativo il fatto che la teologia negativa sia collegata, in queste omelie, alla asserzione della infinitezza di Dio (che produce, come conseguenza, il fatto che l'ascesa dell'anima non può avere un termine): l'ampia

77 Abbiamo citato a lungo questa interpretazione, perché di questo versetto si era già interessato Ippolito (*Comm. Cant* 11 5–8, G. Garitte, *Beati Hippolyti Sermo, Interpretatio Cantici Cantorum, Traités d'Hippolyte*, CSCO 263, Louvain 1965), intendendolo come una allusione al diffondersi del nome di Cristo nella società pagana. Anche Origene ne avrebbe dato una interpretazione differente (cf. R. Placida, "La presenza di Origene nelle *Omellerie sul Cantico dei Cantici* di Gregorio di Nissa", *Vetera Christianorum* 34 [1997], 33–49, 34–35).

78 Così L. Ayres, "On not three people: the fundamental themes of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian theology as seen in *To Ablabius: on not three gods*", in: S. Coakley (ed.), *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Oxford 2003, 15–44, 35.

79 Si vedano *Cant* III (GNO VI 85,15–19): ogni insegnamento a proposito della natura inespri-mibile, anche se impiega pensieri elevati e degni, è pur sempre "somialtanze di oro", non l'oro (cf. Ct 1.11.); *Cant* VI (GNO VI 181,16–21): "lo chiamavo per nome, per quanto mi era possibile trovare un nome per colui che non è nominabile, ma non esistevano significati di nomi che raggiungevano colui che andavo cercando": esegesi di Ct 3.2, cf. anche *Cant* VI (GNO VI 183,2–5).

80 *Cant* XII (GNO VI 357,3–20).

81 Ct 5.6.

spiegazione di un passo della quinta omelia,⁸² insiste sul fatto che “la natura beata ed eterna e superiore ad ogni intelletto non è racchiusa da nessun confine”; alla maniera platonica si insiste sul fatto che di essa non si può trovare nessun elemento che la caratterizzi, e, quindi, la limiti: né tempo né luogo né colore né figura né forma né peso né quantità né distanza né alcun altro nome che serva a definire.

5.2 *Teologia e cristologia*

In conformità con il carattere omiletico di quest'opera, la teologia trinitaria non è approfondita, ma è presentata come già stabilita e non bisognosa di discussione:

colui che è unico si coglie nella natura immutabile ed eterna, che è il vero Padre e il Figlio Unigenito e lo Spirito Santo. Una cosa sola, infatti, è veramente quell'essere che si vede in una sola natura e non ammette nessuna separazione o mutamento, per quanto attiene alla differenza delle ipostasi. Vi sono alcuni, infatti, che con occhi storti hanno inopportuna-mente una vista acuta a proposito delle cose che non esistono e con le traveggole dei loro occhi malati dividono in molte nature l'essere che è unico.⁸³

Altrettanto dicasi per la cristologia, che è esposta senza discussioni e polemiche antieretiche (siamo lontani dall'*Antirrheticus* contro Apollinare). In un passo della quarta omelia,⁸⁴ Gregorio interpreta Ct 1.16 “il letto ombreggiato” nel senso che la sposa intende, con un significato traslato, la “mescolanza” della natura umana con l'essere divino, così come, nel letto materiale, ha luogo l'unione dell'uomo con la donna.⁸⁵ Il termine “mescolanza” (χρᾶσις) è usato quasi costantemente nel *Contra Eunomium*,⁸⁶ per indicare l'incarnazione di Cristo, cioè l'unione della natura umana con quella divina (non si ha ancora la definizione precisa di “persona”). Nelle *Omellerie sul Cantico* si legge che ha luogo

82 *Cant V* (GNO VI 157,14–158,15).

83 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 258,1–9). Un altro esempio di accenno rapido e non approfondito alla dottrina trinitaria è dato dalla interpretazione di Acts 10.10–16 (*Cant X* [GNO VI 310,14 ss.]): l'invito a Pietro di cibarsi di quello che gli viene offerto fu ripetuto tre volte (non una sola volta la voce divina aveva detto: “Non c'è niente di impuro in quello che Dio ha purificato”), in quanto ogni volta l'invito a purificarsi è dato da una Persona della Trinità. Scarsi sono, nel complesso, i passi di queste Omellerie che discutono del problema trinitario.

84 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 108,1–4).

85 Anche *Cant V* (GNO VI 180,9): il talamo indica l'unione del Logos con il corpo umano).

86 *Eun* III/1 45; III/3 34; III/3 67 (GNO II 19; 119–120; 131–132).

la perfetta illuminazione allorquando risplende la luce vera a coloro che stanno seduti nelle tenebre e nell'ombra della morte grazie alla mescolanza (συνανάκρασις) della luce stessa con la nostra natura.⁸⁷ “La casa”, nella quale la sposa vuole fare entrare lo sposo⁸⁸ indica la vita umana, mentre la mano dello sposo⁸⁹ simboleggia la mano creatrice dell'universo. Questa mano si è soffermata nella casa, restringendosi nella piccola e umile realtà della vita nostra. Per questo motivo ci si domanda come Dio abbia potuto apparire nella carne, come il Logos si sia fatto carne, come ci sia stato un parto nella condizione virginale e una condizione virginale nella madre, come la luce si sia congiunta (καταμίγνυται) alla tenebra e la vita si sia mescolata (κατακίρνεται) alla morte.⁹⁰ Anche una definizione cristologica tipica del Nisseno e che si trova già nella *Oratio catechetica magna* (τὸ θεοδόχον σῶμα, “il corpo che ha accolto entro di sé Dio”) si trova due volte⁹¹ in queste omelie.

La mariologia, che non è frequentemente trattata dal Nisseno, ha una sua ampia trattazione in XIII⁹² (secondo la simbologia Eva-Maria).

È una novità il fatto che l'esegesi del *Cantico* ricorre a immaginare presente nell'unione mistica tra la sposa e lo sposo anche lo Spirito santo, e non solamente il Logos, conforme agli interessi del Nisseno per la pneumatologia, manifestati soprattutto nel *De Spiritu sancto*, che precede di poco le *Omellerie sul Cantico*. In un passo,⁹³ Gregorio, spiegando che l'anima pura è come uno specchio trasparente e pulito, nel quale viene rappresentata l'immagine di Dio – qui indicata con il termine “archetipo” – conclude che l'anima, avvicinatasi alla luce, diventa anch'essa luce: “E nella luce viene effigiata la bella forma della colomba – intendo dire di quella colomba la cui forma ci raffigurò la presenza dello Spirito Santo”.⁹⁴

Quindi, l'unione dell'anima non si realizza solamente con il Logos, ma, contemporaneamente, anche con lo Spirito, che non è staccato dal Logos, e la colomba, che è l'anima secondo le parole del *Cantico*, si congiunge con la colomba di cui parla il Vangelo e che è lo Spirito. L'identificazione della

87 *Cant V* (GNO VI 145,6–9).

88 *Ct* 5,4–5.

89 *Ct* 1,4.

90 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 338,2–11).

91 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 388,22 e 391,2).

92 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 388,19 ss.).

93 *Cant V* (GNO VI 150,18–151,2).

94 Cf. Lk 3,22. Dünzl ritiene che Gregorio avesse, per questo, un modello in Origene (*Comm. Cant III* 1,4 ss.) (cf. F. Dünzl, “Die *Canticum*-Exegese des Gregor von Nyssa und des Origenes im Vergleich”, 104–105), ma il significato del passo è assolutamente diverso (secondo Origene, l'anima, paragonata alla colomba, e quindi allo Spirito, diviene in grado di leggere e interpretare spiritualmente le Scritture).

colomba con lo Spirito santo non è, naturalmente, una novità – è una novità questa applicazione al testo del *Cantico*.

Questo interesse per lo Spirito è ulteriormente accentuato nell'ultima omelia:⁹⁵ la sua posizione alla fine dell'opera non è casuale. Gregorio conferma l'identificazione che si realizza tra l'anima / colomba e lo Spirito / colomba. Commentando Ct 6.9 ("Una sola è la mia colomba, la mia perfetta. È l'unica di sua madre, eletta da colei che la partorì"), Gregorio afferma che colui che è cresciuto spiritualmente ed è in grado di ricevere la gloria dello Spirito Santo grazie alla sua purezza,

costui, dunque, è la colomba perfetta [...] Senza dubbio noi non ignoriamo chi sia la madre della colomba [...] Poiché, dunque, quello che è nato dallo Spirito è spirito, e la figlia è colomba, senza dubbio, allora, è colomba anche la madre della figlia, quella che volò giù dai cieli sul Giordano come Giovanni attesta.⁹⁶

6 Spiritualità

Più insistita e più ricca la discussione sugli aspetti spirituali, che sono veramente i temi centrali delle *Omellerie sul Cantico dei Cantici* e costituiscono la novità di quest'ultima fatica del Nissen. Un confronto tra le *Omellerie sulle beatitudini* e quelle sul *Cantico* fu proposto da Mosshammer, il quale concluse che, nei quindici anni che intercorrono tra le due opere, Gregorio mutò radicalmente la prospettiva del rapporto tra perfezione umana e visione di Dio. Mentre nell'opera più giovanile Gregorio vedeva possibile una relazione di ascesa, ora Gregorio propone una "horizontal motion of mankind as a whole through time towards the unity left unrealized at the beginning. What makes this horizontal motion possible is the descent into time of Christ". La prospettiva delle *Omellerie sulle beatitudini* era prodotta dallo scarso peso dato ad una teologia dell'incarnazione, in una concezione essenzialmente platonica, mentre alla fine della sua vita Gregorio è più interessato ad una economia della salvezza.⁹⁷

95 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 467,6 ss.).

96 Qui il riferimento non è più al passo di Luca, ma a Jn 1.32.

97 Cf. A.A. Mosshammer, "Gregory's intellectual Development: A comparison of the *Homilies on the Beatitudes* with the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*", in: H. Drobner – A. Viciano (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes*, Leiden – Boston 2000, 359–387, 386–387.

Sulla base di questi interessi, le dottrine spirituali del *Cantico* sono considerate come dei veri e propri misteri al di sopra di ogni contemplazione.⁹⁸

La dottrina dei sensi dell'anima trova in queste omelie la più ampia applicazione, perché si connette alla descrizione dei sentimenti che l'anima prova nel suo contatto con lo sposo divino. È noto che tale dottrina deriva da Origene, e Gregorio la presenta con un'ampia elaborazione.⁹⁹ Anche in altre omelie ne fornisce alcuni esempi: il frutto del fico, inteso spiritualmente, dapprima appare aspro, ma poi addolcisce i sensi dell'anima (τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς αἰσθητήρια);¹⁰⁰ la vicinanza dello sposo procura all'anima della sposa "una sensazione della sua presenza (αἴσθησιν τῆς παρουσίας)".¹⁰¹ Altrove,¹⁰² Gregorio si riferisce a Heb 5.14, in cui Paolo oppone ai bambini "i perfetti", "il cui senso è esercitato a discernere il bene dal male", perché i perfetti hanno purificato i sensi dell'anima. Così il dispiegarsi dei sensi spirituali è la conseguenza della purificazione, che ha lo scopo di liberare l'anima dalla vita sensibile, cioè dai sensi esteriori, e restituirla all'esercizio delle sue facoltà divine. I sensi spirituali, dunque, corrispondono, come afferma Daniélou,¹⁰³ al terzo, e più alto, grado della vita spirituale, alla θεωρία. Questo era stato detto già da Origene;¹⁰⁴ Daniélou osserva che i vari sensi spirituali spesso sono condotti da Gregorio ad un significato sacramentale: il profumo del pane si riallaccia alla manna ed alla celebrazione eucaristica.¹⁰⁵ Tra l'eucaristia, simboleggiata dalla esortazione dello Sposo agli amici ("mangiate, amici, e bevete, e inebriatevi, fratelli miei"), e la vita mistica esiste un sicuro collegamento.¹⁰⁶

Questo "inebriarsi" introduce alla dottrina della "sobria ebbrezza", che è presentata con insistenza, a causa del suo carattere mistico.¹⁰⁷ La sobria ebbrezza

98 τὰ ἄδυστα καὶ ἀθεώρητα: *Cant XI* (GNO VI 325,21).

99 *Cant I* (GNO VI 34,1 ss.).

100 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 274,6).

101 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 324,10–11). Su questa espressione, cf. l'ampia discussione di F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 301–303.

102 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 400,1–7).

103 Per approfondire lo studio del tema, si può cominciare considerando il classico lavoro di J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, Paris 1954, 222–251; il tema è stato ripreso recentemente da M. Laird, il quale insiste sulla concretezza non solo dei sensi spirituali, ma dei sensi materiali, che non sono estranei al desiderio dell'anima di "toccare" concretamente Dio (cf. M. Laird, "Under Solomon's tutelage: the education of desire in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*", 77–95).

104 Origene (*Cant Hom.*, IV 3).

105 *Cant X* (GNO VI 305,18–21).

106 *Cant X* (GNO VI 308,5–11).

107 Già trattata nella monografia di Lewy (cf. H. Lewy, *Sobria Ebrietas. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik*, Giessen 1929), classica ma bisognosa di una riconsiderazione aggiornata agli studi più recenti.

procura il distacco dalle cose terrene, ma in senso forte, cioè essa può essere considerata un’“estasi”.¹⁰⁸ Ogni ebbrezza produce solitamente l’estasi – cioè il distacco – della mente, come viene illustrato in un’ampia trattazione.¹⁰⁹ Tale estasi – distacco dalla realtà materiale permette di vedere la bellezza non contemplabile (τὸ ἀθέατον κάλλος) di Dio.¹¹⁰

Una delle dottrine platoniche che più aveva avuto successo nella scuola di Alessandria e tra i Cappadoci è sicuramente quella della “assimilazione a Dio” (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ), comunemente collegata alla pratica della virtù e all’ottenimento della *apatheia*, attraverso la quale l’uomo riacquista la somiglianza originaria con Dio, secondo la dottrina di Gn 1.26. Tale connotazione platonica e “filosofica”, frequente in tutta l’opera del Nisseno, appare anche nelle *Omellerie sul Cantico dei Cantici*.¹¹¹ L’impassibilità è condizione preliminare e necessaria per evitare l’interpretazione materialistica e letterale del *Cantico*; la forma che l’anima ha ottenuto mediante i pensieri puri è beatitudine e impassibilità, contatto con Dio (ἡ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον συνάφεια), estraniamento ai mali e assimilazione a quello che realmente è bello e buono (τὸ ὄντως καλὸν τε καὶ ἀγαθόν).¹¹² L’assimilazione è anche definita “partecipazione” (μετουσία) a Dio.

Ma molto più frequente, in queste omellerie, è la modifica della definizione di “assimilazione a Dio” con il concetto della “assimilazione all’archetipo”, che, pur con l’impiego di un termine di chiara tradizione platonica, sottolinea maggiormente il rapporto personale dell’anima e Dio attraverso la mistica.

Se, inoltre, la creazione dell’uomo all’inizio attesta che la natura nostra fu fatta a immagine e somiglianza di Dio, senza dubbio colui che fu fatto a immagine ebbe in tutto e per tutto la somiglianza con l’archetipo.¹¹³

Questa dottrina della presenza di Dio nell’anima pura, che è come uno specchio della bellezza trascendente, ha a che fare più con questa caratterizzazione che con la dottrina tradizionale e platonica della assimilazione mediante le virtù. L’assimilazione, infatti, può essere intesa come uno dei vari aspetti del fatto che l’anima è come uno specchio in cui Dio stesso si riflette, appunto perché creata a sua immagine (l’immagine esiste nello specchio), più che come una somi-

¹⁰⁸ *Cant V* (GNO VI 156,17–20).

¹⁰⁹ *Cant X* (GNO VI 308,14–311,7). In questo modo il sonno procurato dall’ebbrezza deve essere inteso come una cessazione dei sensi spirituali (GNO VI 311,8–313,24).

¹¹⁰ *Cant X* (GNO VI 309,6).

¹¹¹ *Cant II* (GNO VI 60,4 ss.) e *Cant IX* (GNO VI 271,11–12).

¹¹² *Cant I* (GNO VI 28,21–29,1).

¹¹³ *Cant XV* (GNO VI 447,13–448,2); cf. anche *Cant XV* (GNO VI 439,19–20).

gianza ottenuta con la pratica – umana – della virtù.¹¹⁴ Questa dottrina ascetica fu presentata dal Nisseno già nella seconda delle *Omellerie sulle Beatitudini*, ma è particolarmente sviluppata in queste sul *Cantico*.¹¹⁵

L'archetipo, inoltre, è caratterizzato non più, astrattamente, come l'origine dell'anima, ma come la fonte della bellezza. Se Gregorio ripete secondo i parametri dell'etica alessandrina, che l'unità con l'archetipo si ottiene grazie alla ἀπάθεια,¹¹⁶ e che la mancanza di passioni è la vita angelica, altre volte Gregorio di Nissa caratterizza questa unità la corrispondenza tra la bellezza dell'anima pura e la bellezza archetipale. Spiegando Ct 1.5 ("Sono nera, e però bella"), a cui è dedicata la seconda omelia,¹¹⁷ Gregorio afferma che precedentemente l'anima umana non era bella, perché si era allontanata dalla bellezza archetipale (τοῦ ἀρχετύπου κάλλους) e per questo motivo era divenuta nera, avvicinandosi al male. Invece, quando attua l'ascesa mistica, si rende simile in tutto alla bellezza archetipale.¹¹⁸

Un passo di forte elaborazione letteraria, che collega insieme i concetti dell'archetipo e dello specchio, si trova nella conclusione dell'opera,¹¹⁹ ove si interpreta Ct 6.3 ("Io sono del mio diletto e il mio diletto è mio"): entro di noi non deve esserci altri che Dio e l'anima deve purificarsi da ogni cosa e da ogni pensiero materiale, trasportandosi, tutta intera e interamente, alla realtà intellegibile e immateriale, e fare di se stessa una splendidissima immagine della bellezza archetipale. E come in un quadro la pittura è conformata a un modello e la bellezza dell'immagine è quella del modello e l'archetipo si vede distintamente nell'imitazione, così colei che dice: "Io sono del mio diletto e il mio diletto è mio" dice di essere stata resa conforme a Cristo,¹²⁰ ricevendo la bellezza che è tipicamente sua, cioè la beatitudine originaria della nostra natura, ed è divenuta bella ad immagine e somiglianza della bellezza primigenia e vera e unica. E come avviene dello specchio, che sia stato fatto a regola d'arte, che mostra in se stesso, nella superficie pura, l'impronta della persona che vi è specchiata allo stesso modo anche l'anima che si sia apparecchiata in modo con-

114 Che lo specchio sia puro, in modo da riflettere Dio, od offuscato, dipende dal libero arbitrio dell'anima stessa – un esempio di "ellenismo cristiano" secondo Mosshammer, a causa dell'accento, tipicamente greco, posto sul libero arbitrio (A.A. Mosshammer, "Gregory of Nyssa and Christian Hellenism", *Studia Patristica* 32 [1997] 170–195, 193–194).

115 Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 90, 11–12); *Cant* IV (GNO VI 104, 1 ss.); *Cant* V (GNO VI 150, 13 ss.).

116 *Cant* II (GNO VI 60, 4).

117 *Cant* II (GNO VI 51, 13) ripresa in *Cant* IV (GNO VI 102, 1–3).

118 *Cant* IX (GNO VI 293, 9–10).

119 *Cant* XV (GNO VI 439, 9–441, 4).

120 Cf. Rm 8.29.

forme al suo uso e abbia gettato via da sé ogni sozzura materiale, ha impresso in se stessa la pura impronta della bellezza immacolata.

L'ideale ascetico della unione *reale* dell'anima con il Logos come si adatta alla concezione, di origine platonica, della ὁμοίωσις θεῷ? Unione con il Logos e assimilazione a Dio sono due realtà che in ultima analisi coincidono, ma teoricamente sono distinte. La ἀπάθεια può talora non essere più una condizione puramente *etica*, come nella maggior parte delle altre opere del Nisseno, ma *mistica*, perché coincide con l'uscire da sé, così come l'assimilazione a Dio, di origine platonica, diviene l'*unione* dell'anima con il Logos. Questo è enunciato da un passo di importanza fondamentale, che raccoglie insieme i tre concetti spirituali di mancanza di passione, uscita da sé e assimilazione a Dio: "Ciascuno deve *uscire da se stesso*, estraniarsi al mondo materiale e risalire, in certo qual modo, *per mezzo della mancanza delle passioni* fino al Paradiso, e per mezzo della purezza *rendersi simile a Dio*".¹²¹

La bellezza di Dio è un altro tema su cui queste omelie insistono in modo particolare. Su questo tema si è soffermato A. Meredith,¹²² il quale ne ha visto le ascendenze plotiniane. Secondo Gregorio, comunque, bellezza e bontà sono interscambiabili, non solo per motivi filosofici, ma anche per l'accezione intrinseca alla lingua greca. Se intesa come concetto teologico, la bellezza divina è bellezza invisibile,¹²³ inaccessibile,¹²⁴ non contemplabile.¹²⁵ Bisogna consacrare al Bene che è al di sopra di ogni intelletto tutti i significati d'amore contenuti nelle parole del *Cantico*, intendendoli in modo puro e incontaminato. Solo quel Bene, infatti, è veramente dolce e desiderabile e amabile,¹²⁶ bene non contenibile¹²⁷ e illimitato.¹²⁸ In conclusione:

la natura semplice e pura e uniforme e immobile e immutabile, che è sempre uguale a se stessa e non abbandona mai se stessa, poiché non ammette alcun contatto con il male, è sempre illimitata nel bene, e non vede niente

¹²¹ *Cant* I (GNO VI 25,6 ss.).

¹²² Cf. A. Meredith s.j., "The Good and the Beautiful in Gregory of Nyssa", in: H. Eisenberger (ed.), *ΕΡΜΗΝΕΥΜΑΤΑ, Festschrift für Hadwig Hörner zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, Heidelberg 1990, 133–145. Meredith si limita, per le *Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici*, a pochi esempi (cf. 139), ma giunge anch'egli alla conclusione che Gregorio sostanzialmente non è interessato alla distinzione, propria del neoplatonismo, tra il bene e il bello.

¹²³ τὸ ἀόρατον κάλλος: *Cant* I (GNO VI 22,15; 38,16); *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 386,3).

¹²⁴ τὸ ἀπρόσιτον τῆς θείας φύσεως κάλλος: *Cant* I (GNO VI 27,9).

¹²⁵ ἀθέατον κάλλος: *Cant* X (GNO VI 309,6); *Cant* XI (GNO VI 321,17); *Cant* XII (GNO VI 348,1).

¹²⁶ *Cant* I (GNO VI 31,3–6).

¹²⁷ ἀχώρητον: *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 386,8–9).

¹²⁸ ἀόριστον: *Cant* XI (GNO VI 321,17); *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 387,3).

che sia suo confine, in quanto non vede attorno a sé nessun suo contrario. L'anima è ritenuta degna della assimilazione a quell'unico profumo che è in Dio [...] il rivestirsi della virtù imita la divina beatitudine, assimilata alla natura divina mediante la purezza e l'impassibilità.¹²⁹

7 Metodo esegetico

È opinione comune che la polemica antiletteralista teorizzata nel prologo sia rivolta contro Diodoro di Tarso.¹³⁰ Ciononostante, come osserva Cahill, l'esistenza di interpretazioni letterali del *Cantico* – che sono, logicamente, le più semplici – è attestata anche per il IV secolo, prima della scuola antiochena: è presente in Cirillo di Gerusalemme,¹³¹ Filastrio¹³² e Gioviniano.¹³³ Quindi non è necessario pensare che il Nisseno avesse di mira esattamente e precipuamente Diodoro. Gregorio contesta le interpretazioni letterali del *Cantico* in senso generale, nel proemio e nelle singole Omelie, ma non fa riferimenti più precisi ad una interpretazione di qualche autore. Il suo metodo esegetico è, naturalmente, quello della distinzione tra lettera e spirito. Nel corso della sua dimostrazione, egli sembra seguire il criterio dell'accumulo delle testimonianze scritturistiche e della evocazione di un testo, che talvolta può essere lontano dal significato del *Cantico*, ma che, a suo parere, aggiunge delle prove alla sua dimostrazione.

Su come si attui l'esegesi del Nisseno, si è soffermato a lungo e con ampiezza di dettagli Dünzl.¹³⁴ Nel presente contesto, noi mettiamo in evidenza solo alcuni particolari, che ci sembrano avere attinenza più diretta con il genere omiletico. Gregorio alcune volte fa riferimento al testo ebraico, che però non conosce direttamente, ma probabilmente solo attraverso Origene.¹³⁵ Per questo motivo, e perché l'ambiente degli ascoltatori non lo richiedeva, i riferimenti all'originale ebraico sono sempre abbastanza rapidi. In un passo,¹³⁶ egli cerca di giustificare la sua interpretazione, asserendo che, se qualche particolare di essa

129 *Cant V* (GNO VI 157–158, in forma di parafrasi).

130 Cf. J.B. Cahill, "The date and setting of Gregory of Nyssa's commentary on the Song of Songs", 453 ss.; R.E. Heine, "Gregory of Nyssa's Apology for Allegory", 364–368.

131 Cirillo di Gerusalemme, *Hom. in Paral.* 10, PG 33, 1141C–1144A.

132 Filastrio, *Haer.* 135,1.

133 Gioviniano, *Hieron., Adv. Iovin.* I 30.

134 Cf. F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 35–55.

135 Cf. F. Dünzl, "Die *Canticum*-Exegese des Gregor von Nyssa und des Origenes im Vergleich", 101–102.

136 *Cant II* (GNO VI 53,15 ss.).

non corrisponde esattamente al testo scritturistico, questo deve essere attribuito alla insufficienza dei traduttori dall'ebraico in greco: "la struttura del greco mal si accorda con l'elegante struttura dell'ebraico, e quindi produce una certa qual confusione in coloro che solo in modo superficiale fanno attenzione al significato delle parole". Anche le ricerche sui nomi geografici contenuti nel *Cantico* risalgono probabilmente a Origene: questo vale per il termine Gad ("coloro che hanno fatto delle ricerche sui luoghi dicono che la regione di Gad è adatta a far crescere bene i grappoli"¹³⁷); per le montagne di Bethel,¹³⁸ per Tharsis,¹³⁹ con la conclusione che "il vizio che in molti modi dimora nella natura umana è stato chiamato dal profeta 'navi di Tharsis'".¹⁴⁰ Queste, dunque, sono le accezioni peggiori del termine "Tharsis". Invece il profeta Ezechiele, quando descrive la visione di Dio, che ebbe in sorte, indicò con questa parola la figura di una delle visioni, così dicendo: "E la loro figura era come la figura di Tharsis'. Coloro che hanno studiato con attenzione i significati delle parole ebraiche dicono che questo termine, nella profezia, indichi la mancanza di colore e di corpo, cioè la natura intellegibile"; sul termine *Kephaz* Gregorio si sofferma in XIII.¹⁴¹

Anche l'impiego di una terminologia erudita, desunta dalla grammatica, è frequente.¹⁴² Ci soffermiamo solo su un passo in cui¹⁴³ Gregorio ricorre al termine tecnico "antigrafo" per indicare un altro manoscritto del testo del *Cantico*, diverso da quello che usava solitamente, allo scopo di dimostrare la coerenza della sua interpretazione del passo di Ct 1.8 ("se tu non conosci te stessa, o bella tra le donne"): essa, a suo parere, è confermata da quanto si legge in questo differente esemplare del testo.¹⁴⁴ Esso dice, infatti: "Se tu non conosci te stessa, o bella tra le donne, *tu sei uscita* dalle tracce dei greggi e *pascoli* i capretti invece delle tende dei greggi", invece di "*esci e pascola*", cioè un fatto avvenuto, e non un'esortazione.¹⁴⁵

137 *Cant* III (GNO VI 97,10–13).

138 *Cant* V (GNO VI 143,13): "le montagne di Bethel, infatti, stando al significato del termine, sembra che indichino la vita sublime e celeste. Infatti coloro che sono esperti della lingua ebraica dicono che questo termine significhi 'la casa di Dio'".

139 *Cant* XIV (GNO VI 409,12–410,15).

140 *Cant* XIV (GNO VI 410,5–6).

141 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 390,11 ss.). Così F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 191–192.

142 Su di esso cf. ancora *ibidem*, 49–51.

143 *Cant* II (GNO VI 67,10–11).

144 Si capisce da queste parole che Gregorio non impiega il termine nel significato della critica testuale moderna, ma semplicemente nel senso di "testo originale" (scl., ebraico), dal quale è derivata la traduzione greca.

145 *Contra*, Dünzl, circa l'esistenza di un altro esemplare impiegato da Gregorio: si tratterebbe di una differente parafrasi. Ma Gregorio usa *antigraphos*, che è termine tecnico, con un suo significato preciso.

Non meraviglia, in un'omelia, il ricorso alle dottrine aritmologiche. Significativa è la discussione sul numero sessanta,¹⁴⁶ che possiede un significato mistico, il quale è ripreso ed integrato nella esegesi escatologica finale, nella quale il Nisseno propone l'interpretazione aritmologica di Ct 6.8: le regine (sessanta), le concubine (ottanta), le infinite giovinette, e la colomba, la perfetta, che è unica.¹⁴⁷ I numeri sessanta e ottanta e la quantità infinita simboleggiano le varie tipologie dell'anima che si salva, le quali comunque si sintetizzano nel numero uno, quello della colomba perfetta, per cui l'amore del Logos per la sposa non viene a mancare a nessuna anima, nonostante le sue imperfezioni. La salvezza delle regine e delle concubine è salvezza che è donata a tutte indifferentemente, come quella della unica colomba: le anime che si salvano, si salvano tutte, anche se con una gradazione di eccellenza, che le distingue.

È un passo di straordinaria grandiosità che conclude degnamente l'opera.

Bibliografia

- Aubineau, M. *Grégoire de Nysse, De la virginité*, SC 119, Paris 1966.
- Ayres, L. "On not three people: the fundamental themes of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian theology as seen in *To Ablabius: on not three gods*", in: S. Coakley (ed.), *Rethinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Oxford 2003, 15–44.
- Bernardi, J. *La prédication des Pères Cappadociens: Le prédicateur et son auditoire*, Paris 1968.
- Cahill, J.B. "The Date and Setting of Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*", *JThS* 32 (1981) 447–460.
- Canévet, M. "Exégèse et théologie dans les traités spirituelles de Grégoire", in: M. Harl [éd.], *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du colloque de Chevetogne (22–26 septembre 1969)*, Leiden 1971, 144–168.
- Cortesi, A. *Le omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa*, Roma 2000.
- Daniélou, J. *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, Paris 1954.
- Daniélou, J. "La chronologie des œuvres de Grégoire de Nysse", *Studia Patristica* 7 (1966) 159–169.
- Dörries, H. "Griechentum und Christentum bei Gregor von Nyssa", *ThLZ* 88 (1963) 569–582.
- Dünzl, F. "Gregor Von Nyssa's Homilien Zum *Canticum* Auf Dem Hintergrund Seiner *Vita Moysis*", *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990) 371–381.

¹⁴⁶ *Cant VI* (GNO VI 193,5–194,7).

¹⁴⁷ *Cant XV* (GNO VI 457,3 ss.).

- Dünzl, F. *Braut und Brautigam: Die Auslegung Des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993.
- Dünzl, F. "Die *Canticum*-Exegese des Gregor von Nyssa und des Origenes im Vergleich", *JAC* 36 (1993) 94–109.
- Dünzl, F. *Gregor von Nyssa. In Canticum Cantorum Homiliae*, Freiburg-Basel 1994.
- Garitte, G. *Beati Hippolyti Sermo, Interpretatio Cantici Cantorum, Traités d'Hippolyte*, CSCO 263, Louvain 1965.
- Heine, R.E. "Gregory of Nyssa's Apology for Allegory", *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 (1984) 360–370.
- Laird, M. "Under Solomon's tutelage: the education of desire in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*", in: S. Coakley (ed.), *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Oxford 2003, 77–95.
- Lewy, H. *Sobria Ebrietas. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik*, Giessen 1929.
- MacMullen, R. "The Preacher's Audience (AD 350–400)", *JThS* 40 (1989) 503–511.
- Maraval, P. "Biography of Gregory of Nyssa", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco – G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 101–116.
- Maspero, G. *Trinity and Man. Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabium*, Leiden – Boston 2007.
- May, G. "Die Chronologie des Lebens und der Werke des Gregor von Nyssa", in: M. Harl (éd.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du colloque de Chevetogne (22–26 septembre 1969)*, Leiden 1971, 51–66.
- Meredith S.J., A. "The Good and the Beautiful in Gregory of Nyssa", in: H. Eisenberger (ed.), *ΕΡΜΗΝΕΥΜΑΤΑ, Festschrift für Hadwig Hörner zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, Heidelberg 1990, 133–145.
- Moreschini, C. "The Cult of Thecla in Cappadocia", in: J.W. Barrier – J.N. Bremmer – T. Nicklas – A. Puig i Tàrrach (eds.), *Thecla: Paul's Disciple and Saint in the East and West*, Leuven 2017, 1–16.
- Mosshammer, A.A. "Gregory of Nyssa and Christian Hellenism", *Studia Patristica* 32 (1997) 170–195.
- Mosshammer, A.A. "Gregory's intellectual Development: A comparison of the *Homilies on the Beatitudes* with the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*", in: H. Drobner – A. Viciano (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes*, Leiden – Boston 2000, 359–387.
- Mosshammer, A.A. "Gregory of Nyssa as Homilist", *Studia Patristica* 37 (2001) 212–239.
- Mosshammer, A.A. "The Created and the Uncreated in Gregory of Nyssa *Contra Eunomium* I 270–295 (GNO I, 105–113)", in: M. Brugarolas (ed.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium I. An English Translation with Supporting Studies*, Leiden 2018, 383–411.
- Placida, R. "La presenza di Origene nelle *Omellerie sul Cantico dei Cantici* di Gregorio di Nissa", *Vetera Christianorum* 34 (1997), 33–49.
- Spira, A. "Volkstümlichkeit und Kunst in der griechischen Väterpredigt des 4. Jahrhunderts", *JÖB* 35 (1985) 55–73.
- Vinel, F. *Grégoire de Nysse, Homélies sur l'Ecclésiaste*, SC 416, Paris 1996.

D'Origène à l'édition de 1615 : sources et postérités des *Homélies sur le Cantique* de Grégoire de Nysse*

Matthieu Cassin

L'étude des *Homélies* elles-mêmes a, pour l'essentiel, retenu l'attention des autres contributeurs de ce volume. L'objet de cet article est légèrement différent : au lieu de concentrer l'attention sur le texte nysséen et sa logique interne, c'est au contraire à ses marges que les pages qui suivent seront consacrées, en considérant dans un premier temps l'amont des *Homélies sur le Cantique*, c'est-à-dire les sources éventuelles de l'exégèse nysséenne du *Cantique*, puis leur aval, en tournant le regard vers leur transmission et leur réception, dans le monde byzantin bien sûr, mais aussi dans les différents christianismes d'Orient et dans la chrétienté latine, jusqu'à la première édition du texte grec au début du 17^e s.

La question des sources est sans doute la plus simple, dans la mesure où Origène constitue la source principale et avouée de l'auteur ; le traitement de cet hypotexte par Grégoire mérite cependant quelques remarques, de même que le rapport des *Homélies* à d'autres œuvres nysséennes. Quant à la transmission et à la réception de l'œuvre, c'est un domaine beaucoup plus complexe et bien moins exploré. L'édition de Hermann Langerbeck (1960) fournit pour les manuscrits grecs une base de travail irremplaçable, mais qui doit être complétée et corrigée sur plusieurs points ; sa reconstitution de l'histoire du texte, en particulier, doit être largement amendée. Si les citations explicites de cette œuvre nysséenne ne semblent pas nombreuses, les *Homélies* ont en revanche connu une ample diffusion par le biais des chaînes exégétiques sur le *Cantique*. En deuxième lieu, elles ont été traduites dans la presque totalité des langues de l'Orient chrétien et ont souvent fourni un fondement essentiel aux exégètes

* Je remercie vivement, pour leur aide précieuse dans le domaine oriental, mes collègues Anne Boud'hors et Alin Suciu, pour le copte, et Bernard Outtier, pour l'arménien et le géorgien, qui m'ont libéralement communiqué références bibliographiques et indications de première main.

Abréviations :

CPG : M. Geerard et alii, *Clavis Patrum graecorum* (Corpus christianorum), Turnhout 1974–1998, 5 vol. et supplément.

Langerbeck : H. Langerbeck, *Gregorii Nysseni Homiliae in Canticum Canticorum* (GNO VI), Leiden 1960.

RGK : E. Gamillscheg – D. Harlfinger – H. Hunger et alii, *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten 800–1600*, I–III, Wien 1981–1997.

ultérieurs du *Cantique*, dans le monde arménien par exemple. Enfin, le processus de réception occidental du texte paraît relativement tardif, malgré quelques prodromes à Florence dans la première moitié du 15^e s. Des traductions latines ne parurent qu'en 1571 et 1573, le texte grec en 1615.

I Des sources ou des antécédents ?

Des commentateurs du *Cantique* qui ont précédé Grégoire, les deux principaux, pour ne pas dire les deux seuls, qui nous soient connus sont Hippolyte de Rome¹ et Origène². L'évêque de Nysse ne semble pas avoir connu le premier³, ce qui restreint considérablement le champ de l'enquête.

1 Origène

Depuis longtemps, la source principale de Grégoire a été identifiée, car il l'indique lui-même dans sa préface, sans toutefois préciser les modalités de sa dépendance⁴ ; au début du 15^e s., déjà, Ambrogio Traversari, avait souligné la dette origénienne⁵. En effet, Origène est au fondement de l'explication nys-séenne, par son *Commentaire*, et peut-être aussi par ses *Homélie*s, même si le fait est moins évident. La chose a déjà été amplement étudiée⁶ ; rappe-

1 CPG 1871 ; version géorgienne éditée et traduite par G. Garitte, *Traité d'Hippolyte sur David et Goliath, sur le Cantique des cantiques et sur l'Antéchrist* (CSCO 263–264, script. iber. 15–16), Louvain 1965.

2 Voir en particulier M.A. Barbàra, *Origene, Commentario al Cantico dei cantici* (Biblioteca patristica 42), Bologna 2005, et l'édition de la traduction latine de Rufin par W.A. Baehrens, *Origenes Werke*, VIII (GCS), Leipzig 1925, ainsi que les volumes de J.-M. Auwers cités *infra*, n. 51 et 53.

3 Le fait est généralement affirmé, avec vraisemblance, mais il ne me semble pas que la démonstration ait été menée de manière systématique.

4 *Cant prol.* (GNO VI 13,3–5).

5 Ambrogio Traversari, *Latinae epistolae...*, Firenze 1759 (reprint Bologna 1968), VIII, 5, à Niccolo Niccoli (II, col. 360) : « Quo in opera sequisse Origenem ingenue fatetur ». Voir M. Pontone, *Ambrogio Traversari monaco e umanista: fra scrittura latina e scrittura greca* (Miscellanea – Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento 4), Savigliano 2010, 6.

6 Voir en particulier M. Canévet, « Exégèse et théologie dans les traités spirituels de Grégoire de Nysse », dans : M. Harl (éd.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du colloque de Chevetogne (22–26 septembre 1969)*, Leiden 1971, 144–168 ; voir également Ead., *Grégoire de Nysse et l'herméneutique biblique. Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu* (Études augustinienes, série Antiquité 99), Paris 1983, en particulier 127–131, 275–283 ; F. Dünzl, « Die Canticum-Exegese des Gregor von Nyssa und des Origenes im Vergleich », *JAC* 36 (1993) 94–109 ; A. Meredith, « Licht und Finsternis bei Origenes und Gregor von Nyssa », dans : Th. Kobusch – B. Mojsisch (éd.), *Platon und den abendländischen Geistes-*

lons seulement l'une des transformations majeures introduites par Grégoire : l'évêque de Nysse est en effet passé d'un commentaire suivi, tel que le pratique Origène, à des homélies, où la matière, si elle suit le fil du texte, est fortement réorganisée. En particulier, Grégoire ne retient le plus souvent que l'une des explications origénienne ; il laisse largement de côté le sens littéral, mais aussi beaucoup d'éléments qui ont trait à la grammaire, à la rhétorique, et à la lecture ecclésiale du *Cantique* : l'analyse très détaillée du texte commenté, qui est caractéristique d'Origène et n'est pas sans liens avec la pratique du commentaire philologique ancien⁷, avec la tradition des écoles, n'est pas la démarche choisie par Grégoire, dont on n'a d'ailleurs conservé aucune œuvre de cette nature. La lecture nysséenne se présente moins comme une reprise du commentaire d'Origène que comme une étape de sa réception : il s'agit nettement, comme l'a remarquablement montré Franz Dünzl, d'une interprétation qui se nourrit d'Origène, et non d'un simple dérivé⁸. Il resterait à mener une analyse détaillée, linéaire, des deux textes, certes fastidieuse, comme l'indiquait naguère M. Canévet⁹, mais qui serait utile pour mieux mettre en évidence les inflexions nysséennes, par ajout, déplacement et omission ; ce n'est bien évidemment pas le lieu de mener une telle comparaison : un commentaire suivi et détaillé des *Homélies* reste un *desideratum*.

Il ne faut pas non plus oublier qu'il peut y avoir des sources origénienne autres que le *Commentaire du Cantique*, comme pour l'interprétation de l'arbre en Gn 2.17 (*Cant* prol. [GNO VI 10] et *Cant* XII [GNO VI 348–350]) qu'a récemment étudiée S. Morlet¹⁰. Grégoire indique que l'arbre ne peut être un figuier, car si c'était le cas, on mourrait en mangeant aujourd'hui une figue ; or le

geschichte, Darmstadt 1997, 48–59 ; R. Placida, « La presenza di Origene nelle *Omellerie sul Cantico dei Cantici* di Gregorio di Nissa », *Vetera christianorum* 34 (1997) 33–49 ; A. Meis, « Das Paradox des Menschen im *Canticum-Kommentar* Gregors von Nyssa und bei Origenes », dans : W.A. Bienert – U. Kühneweg (éds.), *Origeniana septima* (BETHL 137), Leuven 1999, 469–496 ; T. Dolidze, « Einige Aspekte der allegorischen Sprache in den Auslegungen von Origenes und Gregor von Nyssa zum Hohenlied », dans : L. Perrone (éd.), *Origeniana octava* (BETHL 164), 2003, 1061–1070. Voir également les remarques d'E. Jeffreys, « *The Song of Songs* and Twelfth Century Byzantium », *Prudentia* 23 (1991) 36–54, ici 41–42.

7 Voir en particulier B. Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe* (Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 18), Basel 1987.

8 F. Dünzl, « Die *Canticum*-Exegese des Gregor von Nyssa und des Origenes im Vergleich », *JAC* 36 (1993) 94–109.

9 M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nysse et l'herméneutique biblique. Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu*, Paris 1983, 128.

10 S. Morlet, « Gn 2.17 : l'exégèse patristique », dans : G. Dahan (éd.), *Gn 2, 17, l'arbre de la connaissance* (Études d'histoire de l'exégèse 9), Paris 2016, 37–68. Je remercie S. Morlet qui m'a aimablement signalé ce point et communiqué son texte.

point semble correspondre à une question soulevée dans l'exégèse rabbinique, comme l'a montré S. Morlet. Vu l'absence de connaissance directe du monde juif chez Grégoire, il serait beaucoup plus probable que l'information provienne de l'*In Gn* d'Origène.

2 *Autres sources*

Si la part la plus importante des sources utilisées par Grégoire est donc clairement origénienne, il ne s'agit en aucune manière d'une exclusivité. L'évêque de Nysse a également puisé à d'autres rivières.

a Les philosophes ou la Bible ?

Y a-t-il à proprement parler des sources philosophiques directes des *Homélies* ? L'apparat de Langerbeck a fait une très large place à de telles références ; mais cet appareil est d'usage complexe, comme beaucoup l'ont déjà souligné : s'agit-il d'un appareil des sources proprement dites, ou plutôt des parallèles ? M. Harl avait naguère montré comment cette prépondérance philosophique dans l'apparat, ou du moins cette présence massive, pouvait être un leurre : plus que de sources directes et décisives, il s'agit bien plutôt de l'un des éléments d'une pensée, qui est largement intégré, pour ne pas dire totalement intégré, dans une matrice chrétienne¹¹. S'il y a un soubassement philosophique incontestable à la pensée de Grégoire, il ne s'agit pas pour autant de sa source principale dans les *Homélies*, ni même, dans la plupart des cas, de sources directes. Les médiations sont ici encore essentielles et ne doivent pas être omises.

b Reprises d'autres œuvres nysséennes

Une autre source ne doit pas être oubliée : c'est Grégoire lui-même. Il est en effet évident que les *Homélies sur le Cantique*, qui se situent au terme, ou à peu près, de la production nysséenne¹², présentent des échos nombreux des œuvres qui les précèdent. Il n'est pas question ici d'en proposer un relevé, ni même

11 M. Harl, « Références philosophiques et références bibliques du langage de Grégoire de Nysse dans les *Orationes in Canticum Cantorum* », dans : H. Heisenberg (éd.), *EPIMHNEY-MATA. Festschrift für Hadwiga Hörner zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, Heidelberg 1990, 117–131 (repris dans : M. Harl, *La Langue de Japhet. Quinze études sur la Septante et le grec des chrétiens*, Paris 1992, 225–249) en particulier 118, 131.

12 Pour la datation des *Homélies*, voir en dernier lieu la synthèse d'A. Cortesi, *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nissa : Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale* (Studia ephemeridis augustinianum 70), Roma 2000, 18. Il est maintenant acquis que *Cant* est postérieur à *Moys* (F. Dünzl, « Gregor von Nyssa's Homilien zum *Canticum* auf dem Hintergrund seiner *Vita Moysis* », *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 [1990] 371–381) et constitue l'une des dernières œuvres nysséennes.

d'établir une liste des thèmes théologiques, exégétiques ou spirituels dont il faudrait étudier l'évolution (ou la continuité) dans l'œuvre de Grégoire à la lumière des *Homélies*. Divers travaux ont déjà entrepris de mettre en lumière ces liens, par exemple à propos de l'infinité divine ou de l'ascension vers Dieu¹³. En revanche, plusieurs passages des *Homélies* présentent des contacts étroits avec des textes nysséens antérieurs, au point qu'on peut considérer qu'ils en sont des réécritures ou des reprises, plus ou moins directes. J'en retiendrai deux exemples, pris au *Contre Eunome*.

Comme je l'ai naguère montré, un passage de *Cant* XIII¹⁴ reprend et réorganise deux sections d'*Eun* III/2¹⁵. On note un changement de perspective assez radical entre ces deux textes : là où Grégoire présentait l'évangile de Jean comme pédagogique dans le *Contre Eunome*, c'est celui de Matthieu qui l'est dans les *Homélies*, tandis que l'évangile de Jean est placé à un niveau plus élevé ; de même, l'explication du titre de « premier-né » est largement réécrite et adaptée au contexte des *Homélies*, en laissant de côté He 1, 6, puisque l'explication porte sur la première venue du Christ, et non plus sur la seconde. De même, les deux développements¹⁶ sur la naissance virginale trouvent un correspondant en *Cant* XIII¹⁷, mais sur un mode beaucoup plus lyrique et développé que dans le traité anti-eunomien. Grégoire reprend non seulement une élaboration exégétique et théologique antérieure, mais même une section déterminée du *Contre Eunome* ; cependant, elle est intégrée à l'œuvre nouvelle et à sa perspective propre, et non simplement reproduite à l'identique.

On trouve un autre exemple d'une réflexion poursuivie, sans doute à dix ou quinze ans de distance, du *Contre Eunome* III/1 jusqu'aux *Homélies sur le Cantique*, 1, à propos du livre biblique des *Proverbes*, de sa nature et de sa place dans la série solomonienne¹⁸. Les sources sont ici multiples et les commenta-

13 Voir par exemple O. Sferlea, *Ἀόριστος. Le thème de l'infini chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Thèse de doctorat, École pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences religieuses, Paris 2010 ; M. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith : Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford, New York 2004.

14 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 386,18–390,8).

15 *Eun* III/2 16–27 ; III/2 43–57 (GNO II 57–61 ; 66–71). Voir M. Cassin, « Confusion eunomienne et clarté nysséenne : *Contre Eunome* III 2 », dans : J. Leemans et M. Cassin (éd.), *Gregory of Nyssa, Contra Eunomium III : an English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Leuven, 14–17 September 2010)* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 124), Leiden, Boston 2014, 264–292, ici 285–288.

16 *Eun* III/2 25–27 ; III/2 51 (GNO II 60–61 ; 69).

17 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 387,13–389,17).

18 *Cant* I (GNO VI 17,7–22,9), ainsi que prol. (GNO VI 4,10–7,16), à rapprocher d'*Eun* III/1 21–65 (GNO II 10–27), et en particulier d'*Eun* III/1 23–27 (GNO II 11–13) et d'*Eun* III/1 41–43

teurs des *Homélies* ont souvent rapporté directement au prologue du commentaire origénien les réflexions de Grégoire sur les *Proverbes*, et ce à bon droit. Toutefois, on note chez l'évêque de Nysse une grande disproportion dans le traitement des trois livres de Salomon, disproportion absente d'Origène : dans l'homélie I, Grégoire traite très longuement des *Proverbes*¹⁹, beaucoup plus brièvement de l'*Ecclésiaste*²⁰, puis sans exagération du *Cantique*, qui est son objet principal²¹. Or cette disproportion se comprend mieux si l'on se souvient du long développement que l'évêque de Nysse a consacré au livre des *Proverbes* et à son genre littéraire en *Eun* III/1, d'une part, et d'autre part de l'homélie de Basile de Césarée *Sur le commencement des Proverbes*²². Or aucun des traducteurs des *Homélies* ne renvoie, dans leurs notes ou leurs commentaires, à ces deux textes, ni à *Eun* III/1, ni à Basile. Il faudrait aussi ajouter les deux premières *Homélies sur l'Ecclésiaste* nysséennes, qui ont part à la même réflexion sur les trois livres. Sans doute dira-t-on qu'on se rapproche ainsi dangereusement des parallèles thématiques, d'abord récusés : il me semble cependant que les rapprochements ici envisagés sont d'une nature un peu différente et relèvent de l'exégèse de versets bibliques et de l'explication de la fonction des trois livres solomoniens, ce qui offre un terrain un peu plus assuré. Mon point principal est cependant le suivant : c'est induire le lecteur en erreur que de le renvoyer seulement aux sources origéniennes, qui sont évidemment présentes ici comme partout ailleurs dans les *Homélies*, sans signaler que ce n'est pas la première fois que Grégoire aborde cette question. La chose est d'autant plus intéressante que dans les deux autres cas, *Contre Eunome* et *Homélies sur l'Ecclésiaste*, il utilisait déjà le prologue d'Origène. On a donc ainsi trois témoins, séparés dans le temps mais aussi par leur fonction et leur contexte, de la lecture d'un même passage d'Origène par Grégoire. Resterait à mener une étude comparative de ces trois lieux.

Ces exemples viennent de ma pratique personnelle du *Contre Eunome* : il est évident que d'autres lecteurs de Grégoire pourront suggérer d'autres rapprochements, qui viendront compléter ceux qu'ont déjà suggérés les traducteurs. On pourrait en particulier penser à des rapprochements avec la *Vie de Moïse*, par exemple pour le résumé, dans l'homélie XII, de la vie de Moïse, comme

(GNO II 18), pour la définition de la nature du livre des *Proverbes* et du mode de lecture qui lui convient. Pour une étude de cette question à partir du passage d'*Eun* III/1, voir M. Cassin, *L'écriture de la controverse chez Grégoire de Nysse : polémique littéraire et exégèse dans le Contre Eunome* (Études augustinienes, série Antiquité 193), Paris 2012, 249–268.

19 *Cant* I (GNO VI 18,10–22,9).

20 *Cant* I (GNO VI 22,9–15)

21 *Cant* I (GNO VI 22,15–23,6)

22 *CPG* 2865.

l'ont déjà noté les études sur les relations entre *Cant* et *Moys*²³, mais la question devrait aussi être reprise dans le détail à propos de toutes les œuvres tardives, ce qui suppose une chronologie établie : vieux *desideratum*.

On retiendra donc, au terme de cette brève enquête, que les *Homélies* s'appuient sur des sources diverses, que leur intégration poussée au sein d'un genre littéraire aux fortes contraintes rhétoriques rend plus malaisées à reconnaître encore qu'à l'ordinaire. En outre, même lorsqu'elles se laissent reconnaître, elles ont le plus souvent fait l'objet d'un important travail non seulement de réécriture mais aussi d'intégration dans la démarche propre de l'exposé nysséen ; le cas est particulièrement frappant pour Origène, mais se retrouve également pour les propres œuvres de Grégoire. Pour mieux comprendre ces *Homélies*, le modèle utile est moins celui de la *Quellenforschung* et du repérage des pièces et morceaux étrangers au sein d'un ensemble artificiel et secondaire que celui de l'atelier, où l'auteur assimile et modifie librement des matériaux qui lui servent à faire naître une nouvelle réalité organique, douée d'un principe d'organisation et de sa finalité propre.

II Tradition grecque médiévale

Après cette brève présentation des sources des *Homélies sur le Cantique* de Grégoire, l'essentiel du propos sera consacré à leur transmission et à leur réception. Si les *Homélies sur le Cantique* ne sont pas l'œuvre nysséenne qui fut la plus recopiée et la plus citée²⁴, elles ont toutefois connu une ample diffusion, et ce malgré leur taille imposante.

1 Tradition directe

Hermann Langerbeck avait utilisé, pour son édition parue en 1960, une quarantaine de manuscrits²⁵, et en signalait une petite dizaine d'autres, dont la plu-

23 Voir F. Dünzl, « Gregor von Nyssa's Homilien zum *Canticum* auf dem Hintergrund seiner *Vita Moysis* », *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990) 371–381.

24 Les textes les plus diffusés parmi les œuvres de Grégoire sont ceux qui ont été tôt intégrés dans des recueils qui ont eux-mêmes été fréquemment copiés ; c'est par exemple le cas de la *Lettre canonique à Letoïus* (CPG 3148), qui a été intégrée très tôt dans les manuscrits canoniques, mais c'est aussi le cas de plusieurs œuvres hagiographiques, en particulier de l'*Éloge d'Étienne le protomartyr* (CPG 3186), de la *Vie de Grégoire le Thaumaturge* (CPG 3184) ou de l'*Éloge de Théodore* (CPG 3183), qui ont été introduits dans les ménologes. Cependant, certaines œuvres, comme les *Homélies sur les Béatitudes* (CPG 3161) sont conservées dans environ 90 manuscrits grecs.

25 H. Langerbeck, *Gregorii Nysseni In Canticum Canticorum* (GNO VI), Leiden 1960.

part pour les chaînes exégétiques – ce domaine sera traité dans un deuxième temps, puisqu'il s'agit dans la plupart des cas d'une tradition indirecte à proprement parler. On peut aujourd'hui ajouter à cette liste une quinzaine de manuscrits qui transmettent en tradition directe le texte des *Homélies*²⁶, sans compter les manuscrits de chaînes, ainsi que quelques extraits transmis de manière isolée; on relèvera en particulier un témoin palimpseste d'Italie méridionale, aujourd'hui conservé à la Vallicelliana (D 53)²⁷ et où les *Homélies* sont à la fois l'un des textes inférieurs et le texte supérieur²⁸. Cette masse de manuscrits se répartit de manière relativement équilibrée entre copies d'époque byzantine (33 manuscrits conservés copiés avant le 15^e s., dont 5 ne comportent que des extraits des *Homélies*), contre 31 manuscrits copiés à partir du 15^e s., dont l'essentiel a été réalisé en Occident.

Dans son introduction, H. Langerbeck avait prêté une certaine attention à la provenance et à l'histoire des manuscrits, démarche qui ne peut que susciter l'intérêt; il estimait avoir poussé assez loin sa tentative pour caractériser plusieurs familles par une appellation renvoyant à leur origine ou à leur nature: famille siculo-crétoise, recension de la bibliothèque patriarcale à

26 Athènes, EBE, 2410, ff. 230–285 (13^e s.); Mouseio Loberdou, 10 (10^e s.?), perdu; Ellassona, Monè tēs Olympiotissēs, 59, ff. 153–173 (16^e s.), extraits; Hagion Oros, Monè Batopediou, 132, ff. 57–193^v (milieu du 14^e s.); Monè Megistēs Lauras, B 97, ff. 61–233 (12^e s.), le texte est probablement complété par la chaîne B, voir *infra*; K 119, ff. 204–375 (17^e s.); Sktētē Kausokalybiōn, Kyriakou 46, ff. 64–70 (13^e s.), extraits; London, British Library, Add. 10070, ff. 30–221 (15^e s.); Moskva, Gosudarstvennyj Istoričeskij Musej, Sinod. gr. 288 (Vladimir 44), ff. 1–186 (fin du 14^e s.); Oxford, Bodleian Library, Holkham gr. 35, ff. 46–168^v (14^e s.); Roma, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, D 53 (voir *infra*); Schleusingen, Hennebergisches Gymnasium, 7 (16^e s.); Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 349, ff. 1 et 378 (11^e s.), fragment de l'hom. VI dans les gardes; Vat. gr. 2129, pp. 337–369 (15^e s.), hom. VI et XII. Les manuscrits Escorial, Real Biblioteca, Y.II.2 et Ω.III.3, mentionnés par Langerbeck, LXXX, n'ont pas été vus par lui.

27 S. Lucà, «Manoscritti greci dimenticati della Biblioteca Vallicelliana», *Augustinianum* 28 (1988) 661–702, ici 689–699. Le texte supérieur des ff. 1–143 a été copié dans la deuxième moitié du 13^e s. en style de Reggio, sans doute à S. Maria di Terreti près de Reggio en Calabre; les *Homélies* occupent les ff. 1–132^v, suivies par le *De infantibus* (ff. 133–143). Le texte inférieur des ff. 65–143, en majuscule ogivale penchée sans doute italo-grecque, datable du 9^e–10^e s., contient également les *Homélies sur le Cantique*; la portion exacte du texte conservée est encore à déterminer.

28 Le cas n'est pas le plus courant, bien au contraire, dans la confection de manuscrits palimpsestes, qui sont très souvent formés, d'ailleurs, à partir de plusieurs manuscrits différents. Elle implique en outre une procédure complexe, que décrit justement à propos de ce manuscrit S. Lucà, «*Ars renouandi*: modalità di riscrittura nell'Italia greca medievale», dans: S. Lucà (éd.), *Libri palinsesti greci: Conservazione, Restauro Digitale, Studio. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Villa Mondragone – Monte Porzio Catone – Università di Roma Tor Vergata – Biblioteca del Monumento Nazionale di Grottaferrata, 21–24 aprile 2004*, Roma 2008, 131–154, ici 143–144 (voir plus largement 135–149).

l'usage des clercs, famille savante, etc. Les avancées des travaux sur les manuscrits grecs, très importantes depuis le milieu du siècle dernier, conduisent à corriger assez largement le tableau tracé par Langerbeck, moins pour le classement des manuscrits – qu'il serait cependant nécessaire de reprendre au vu des témoins supplémentaires et de quelques erreurs de détail – que pour l'histoire du texte. J'examinerai ici deux groupes de *codices*, afin de mettre en évidence les conséquences sur la reconstruction du texte et l'évaluation des différents témoins, des modifications qu'il convient d'apporter au tableau de Langerbeck.

a Sicile et Crète, ou plutôt Constantinople ?

L'éditeur nomme la première famille qu'il reconstitue « siculo-cretica »²⁹ ; il échafaude ensuite l'hypothèse que l'état textuel de cette famille se serait diffusé de Sicile vers la Crète à la faveur de la domination islamique. La supposition paraît un peu hasardeuse pour deux raisons : tout d'abord, au plan historique, la domination musulmane sur la Crète est courte (824–961) et l'île relève alors des abbassides ; à la même époque, la Sicile dépend des aghlabides de Kairouan, puis des Fatimides. En outre, il n'y a pas, à ma connaissance, de mouvements de manuscrits attestés dans ce sens à cette période³⁰. Mais surtout, l'origine géographique de cette famille est très contestable. En effet, le manuscrit Paris, BnF, Coislin 58, s'était vu attribuer par R. Devreesse à l'Italie méridionale³¹ ; Langerbeck étend ensuite, sans argument, cette origine à la Sicile, ce qui est déjà discutable. Mais surtout, on peut montrer que le Coislin 58 provient plutôt de Constantinople³² ; en effet, la famille Chalkoutzès, dont un membre a porté une note de possession sur le manuscrit, est attestée à partir du 10^e s. à

29 Langerbeck, x–xviii, voir en particulier x–xi pour l'élaboration de l'hypothèse historico-géographique.

30 Au contraire, on relève en général plutôt des mouvements de manuscrits depuis la Syrie-Palestine et Chypre vers l'Italie méridionale et la Sicile au moment de la conquête musulmane des provinces orientales. Voir par exemple les réflexions et les références de S. Lucà, « Su origine e datazione del Crypt. B.β.vi (ff. 1–9). Appunti sulla collezione manoscritta greca di Grottaferrata », dans : L. Perria (éd.), *Tra Oriente e Occidente. Scritture e libri greci fra le regioni orientali di Bisanzio e l'Italia* (Testi e studi bizantino-neoellenici 14), Roma 2003, 145–224, ici 174–181.

31 R. Devreesse, *Bibliothèque nationale, Département des manuscrits. Catalogue des manuscrits grecs. II, Le Fonds Coislin*, Paris 1945, 54–55.

32 Voir en particulier P. Canart, « Le livre grec en Italie méridionale sous les règnes normand et souabe : aspects matériels et sociaux », *Scrittura e civiltà* 2 (1978) 103–162, ici 132 et n. 60, et en dernier lieu M. Cassin, « Tradition manuscrite grecque de l'Histoire ecclésiastique », dans : S. Morlet et L. Perrone (éd.), *Eusèbe de Césarée, Histoire ecclésiastique. Commentaire. I, Études d'introduction* (Anagôgè), Paris 2012, 209–242, ici 220.

Constantinople et dans les provinces orientales, mais non en Italie méridionale ou en Sicile³³. En outre, un folio du Coislin 58 a été utilisé comme garde dans l'actuel Paris, BnF, gr. 1430, manuscrit de l'*Histoire ecclésiastique* d'Eusèbe; or ce dernier volume est attesté en Orient, et en particulier à Constantinople, jusqu'à ce qu'il soit rapporté en France pour Mazarin dans la seconde moitié du 17^e s. Il est donc beaucoup plus économique de supposer que les deux manuscrits ont séjourné en Orient, sans doute dans la même bibliothèque à un moment donné de leur histoire. Le lien avec la Sicile qu'affirmait Langerbeck n'a donc aucun fondement.

Les autres manuscrits de la famille sont tous d'origine orientale, mais les liens avec la Crète en sont beaucoup plus tardifs que ce que supposait l'éditeur, et il paraît pour le moins hasardeux de supposer un *codex creticus* comme ancêtre du Paris gr. 999 et de ses descendants. En effet, le seul manuscrit de ce groupe qui ait un lien avec la Crète est le *codex* Firenze, Bibl. Medicea Laurenziana, plut. 7.30; il a été acquis par Cristoforo Buondelmonti à Castel Belvedere en 1415³⁴; mais il a été copié en 1323 par Michaël Anagnostès, pour un certain Jean, dont on sait, par d'autres manuscrits dus au même copiste, qu'il s'agissait du métropolite de Nymphée (aujourd'hui Kemalpaşa, dans la province d'Izmir)³⁵; la ville de Nymphée était tombée aux mains des Turcs en 1315. Le livre est passé ensuite en Crète, mais son texte n'est pas crétois, moins encore celui de son modèle. Les liens de cette famille de manuscrits avec la Crète sont donc purement passagers et secondaires.

La première famille de Langerbeck ne peut donc se voir attribuer une origine géographique précise et encore moins être liée à l'Italie méridionale ou à la Crète; elle peut simplement être rattachée à l'Orient byzantin, et en particulier à Constantinople et à l'Asie mineure; aussi ne fournit-elle pas un état textuel que son origine géographique doterait d'une valeur particulière, comme

33 Voir les références données par M. Cassin, « Tradition manuscrite grecque de l'Histoire ecclésiastique », 220, n. 66.

34 Voir A. Turyn, *Dated Greek Manuscripts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries in the Libraries of Italy*, Urbana – Chicago – London 1972, 148–150.

35 Voir *ibidem*, et l'interprétation de la souscription que corrige G. Prato, « I manoscritti greci dei secoli XIII e XIV: note paleografiche », dans: D. Harlfinger – G. Prato (éds.), *Paleografia e codicologia greca. Atti del II. Colloquio internazionale (Berlino-Wolfenbüttel 17–21 ottobre 1983)*, Alessandria 1991, 131–149, ici 132–133 n. 8 (repris dans *Studi di paleografia greca* [Collectanea 4], Spoleto 1994, 115–131, ici 116–117 et n. 8). Voir aussi le manuscrit Istanbul, Patriarchikè bibliothèkè, Panaghia 68, copié par le même copiste pour le même commanditaire, et daté de 1315–1316 (M. Kouroupou – P. Géhin, *Catalogue des manuscrits conservés dans la Bibliothèque du Patriarcat œcuménique. Les manuscrits du monastère de la Panaghia de Chalki*, Turnhout 2008, 219–223, ici 222).

c'est le cas pour les livres qui proviennent de zones géographiques périphériques – on suppose généralement qu'ils sont moins susceptibles de révisions et de croisements avec d'autres branches de la tradition que dans les zones centrales. L'appellation *siculo-cretica* de Langerbeck est donc trompeuse et doit être abandonnée.

b La bibliothèque patriarcale, ou plutôt l'Athos, Thessalonique et la Syrie-Palestine ?

En deuxième lieu, Langerbeck caractérise la troisième famille qu'il présente comme « recension de la bibliothèque patriarcale faite à l'usage des clercs »³⁶. Cette recension serait caractérisée, selon lui, par une suppression de passages condamnables au plan théologique, et en particulier du prologue³⁷. Langerbeck situe la réalisation de cette recension au niveau du modèle des manuscrits de Tübingen dont il sera question dans un instant, c'est-à-dire dans une copie du chef de famille, le Vat. gr. 449. La caractérisation de la famille est donc problématique : son modèle ne contiendrait pas les traits caractéristiques de celle-ci, qui n'apparaîtraient que dans une partie des copies. Qu'en est-il, en réalité, du texte de cette famille et de l'histoire de ses manuscrits ?

L'histoire du plus ancien témoin, l'actuel manuscrit Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 449 (Σ)³⁸, n'est pas aisée à reconstituer ; on peut simplement relever qu'il porte une note de possession d'un certain Lunanus/Lucianus Xama (?), note qui se retrouve dans plusieurs manuscrits de l'ancien fonds vatican et qui remonterait au 15^e s. environ. Il pourrait s'agir d'un envoyé papal chargé de collecter des manuscrits en Orient pour la bibliothèque³⁹. Or la provenance d'au moins l'un des manuscrits qu'il a annotés est à peu près assurée : le Vat. gr. 703, du 14^e s., porte une note de donation au Pantocrator de l'Athos et une note de possession du même monastère⁴⁰ ; le faible écart chronologique entre la copie et la collecte du manuscrit laisse à penser

36 Langerbeck, xxx–xxxvii, et en particulier xxxvi–xxxvii pour ses hypothèses sur l'origine de la famille de manuscrits et ses caractéristiques.

37 Voir également les quelques éléments rassemblés par Langerbeck, xxxii–xxxiii et lxvi–lxvii.

38 R. Devreesse, *Codices vaticani graeci*. II, *Codices 330–603*, Città del Vaticano 1937, 199–200.

39 Id., *Le fonds grec de la Bibliothèque vaticane des origines à Paul v* (Studi e testi 244), Città del Vaticano 1965, 9 et n. 4. Pour le dossier de ces notes au nom mal déterminé, voir également F. D'Aiuto, « Note ai manoscritti del Menologio imperiale », *RSBN* 39 (2002) 189–224, ici 202 n. 33.

40 Id., *Codices vaticani graeci*. III, *Codices 604–866*, Città del Vaticano 1950, 181–186 et en particulier 186, pour la note de donation (f. 1^r) et la note de possession (f. 1) du Pantocrator de l'Athos.

que le *codex* n'a pas dû beaucoup voyager. On peut donc supposer pour tout ou partie des manuscrits de ce mystérieux *Lucianus* une provenance athonite. En outre, le deuxième manuscrit de ladite famille est conservé à l'Athos, à la Grande Laure (Hagion Oros, Monè Megistès Lauras, B 59, 13^e s.); on ne sait rien de son histoire antérieure, mais vu l'histoire des bibliothèques athonites, il est tout à fait possible qu'il n'ait jamais quitté la Sainte Montagne. Sa localisation actuelle tendrait en tout cas à confirmer l'hypothèse émise plus haut sur la provenance du Vat. gr. 449, puisque le manuscrit de Lavra en est une copie directe⁴¹.

Outre ces deux témoins, la famille est composée de trois autres manuscrits, aujourd'hui conservés à Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek⁴², et d'une copie qui se trouve à Munich mais provient d'Augsbourg (BSB, Cod.Graec. 528)⁴³; c'est à cause de l'un des premiers que l'éditeur a voulu rattacher la famille à la bibliothèque patriarcale.

Tout d'abord, pour cette zone du stemma, l'éditeur a introduit une certaine confusion. L'actuel Mb 7 date en effet du 2^e quart du 14^e s. (et non du 16^e s.), sauf pour les ff. 67–68^v, restaurés par Manuel Malaxos dans les années 1560–1570⁴⁴; le Mb 1, qui date, lui, de la 2^e moitié du 16^e s. et a été copié par Théodose Zygomalas, est une copie du précédent (et non son frère); il a été vendu par le même Zygomalas à Stefan Gerlach en 1573⁴⁵.

Le manuscrit Mb 7 porte en outre une note de la première moitié du 15^e s. attestant qu'il a alors été utilisé pour l'étude du texte nysséen à Thessalonique, dans l'entourage du métropolite Syméon⁴⁶. Une telle localisation laisse sup-

41 Langerbeck, XXXIII–XXXIV.

42 Mb 1, 7, 38.

43 Les deux manuscrits les plus récents, Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek, Mb 38, et München, Bayerischestaatsbibliothek, Cod.Graec. 528, n'entrent pas ici en ligne de compte. Le premier est une copie du Mb 7 réalisée par Martin Crusius et datée de janvier-mars 1579. Le second est probablement une copie de ce dernier; sur ce manuscrit, voir *infra*, p. 108.

44 Voir le catalogue en ligne: <http://www.inka.uni-tuebingen.de/hand.php>. Le catalogue de W. Schmid, *Verzeichnis der griechischen Handschriften der Königlichen Universitätsbibliothek zu Tübingen* (Systematisch-alphabetischer Hauptkatalog der Königlichen Universitätsbibliothek zu Tübingen), Tübingen 1902, 13–14, donne une datation erronée (15^e–16^e s.), qui a été reprise par Langerbeck (p. XXXIV). Voir également les éléments fournis sur ce manuscrit par G. De Gregorio, *Il copista greco Manouel Malaxos: studio biografico e paleografico-codicologico* (Littera antiqua 8), Città del Vaticano 1991, 12–14, 78; voir également G. de Gregorio, «Studi su copisti greci del tardo Cinquecento. I, Ancora Manuel Malaxos», *Römische Historische Mitteilungen* 37 (1995) 97–144, ici 102–103.

45 Voir le catalogue en ligne cité à la note précédente.

46 La note du f. 124, qui peut être datée d'après l'indiction de 1420, a été portée par un certain Georges, prêtre et *nomikos*, et atteste l'étude du texte nysséen, expliqué par

poser que le manuscrit pourrait provenir également de l'Athos, tout proche, au vu des deux autres manuscrits présentés auparavant, puisque le Mb 7 est, d'après Langerbeck, une copie du Vat. gr. 449. Le Tübingen, Mb 7 a ensuite été restauré par Manuel Malaxos et relié, dans les années 1560–1570 à Constantinople, puis offert en 1578 par Théodose Zygomalas au groupe des théologiens de Tübingen, dont Martin Crusius, par l'intermédiaire de Stefan Gerlach, chapelain de l'ambassadeur du Saint-Empire auprès de la Porte, David von Ungnad⁴⁷. C'est la seule note de donation écrite par Zygomalas qui indique que le manuscrit se trouvait en 1578 dans la bibliothèque patriarcale ; le fait est d'ailleurs un peu surprenant, car on s'attendrait plutôt, dans le cas où le manuscrit aurait appartenu à cette bibliothèque, que ce fût le patriarche, et non Zygomalas, tout pronotaire qu'il fût, qui soit à l'origine du don⁴⁸.

Donc nous n'avons aucune trace d'un lien entre la famille du Vat. gr. 449 et le Patriarcat de Constantinople avant le 3^e quart du 16^e s., et les notes qu'il porte rendent peu probable qu'il lui ait appartenu avant 1453, s'il lui a jamais appartenu ; si la suppression du prologue dans le Mb 1 est intentionnelle, comme le suppose Langerbeck, et non pas le fruit d'un simple accident matériel, comme cela paraît probable, elle doit être expliquée autrement que par une correction doctrinale dans le milieu patriarcal à la période byzantine, puisque deux des témoins (dont le modèle supposé de la famille, le Vat. gr. 449) ont bien le prologue, et qu'on n'a aucune trace d'une activité d'épuration doctrinale des textes en milieu patriarcal au 16^e s., date à laquelle l'un des manuscrits est peut-être lié pour la première fois au Patriarcat. Au contraire, plusieurs indices

Syméon, métropolite de Thessalonique (1416/1417–1429) ; sur le personnage et son cercle, voir B. Fonkič, « Τὰ παλαιότερα χειρόγραφα μὲ ἔργα τοῦ Συμεὼν Θεσσαλονίκης. Παλαιογραφικὲς παρατηρήσεις », dans : *Β' Διεθνὲς Συμπόσιο Βυζαντινῆ Μακεδονία. Δίκαιο, Θεολογία, Φιλολογία*, 26–28 νοεμβρίου 1999 *Θεσσαλονίκη (Μακεδονικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη 95)*, Thessalonikē 2003, 33–41 ; D. Bianconi, *Tessalonica nell'eta dei Paleologi. Le pratiche intellettuali nel riflesso della cultura scritta* (Dossiers byzantins 5), Paris 2005, 241–242.

47 Voir la note de donation du f. v°. Pour les manuscrits rapportés par Stefan Gerlach, voir en particulier G. De Gregorio, « Constantinopoli-Tubinga-Roma, ovvero la "duplice conversione" di un manoscritto bizantino (Vat. gr. 738) », *BZ* 93 (2000) 37–107 et en particulier 48–49.

48 Le témoignage de S. Gerlach sur l'état de la bibliothèque patriarcale lors de sa visite du 18 juin 1577 n'est pas sans intérêt pour mesurer la nature et le fonctionnement de cette institution : « Aujourd'hui j'ai visité la bibliothèque patriarcale et y ai trouvé de méchants livres. Seul Chrysostome est presque complet, quelque chose d'Athanase, Épiphanes sur Jean, sinon presque aucun des Pères de l'Église importants. Il y a en tout 150 livres qui gisent dans la poussière dans une cave voûtée et que personne ne lit. Le Patriarche n'a rien voulu me prêter à domicile, mais je peux bien (les) lire au Patriarcat, ce que leur loi permet » (*Tagebuch...*, Frankfurt am Main 1674, 360 ; tr. inédite de J.-P. Grégois).

pointent vers le mont Athos et la région de Thessalonique pour l'origine byzantine de la famille; on peut d'ailleurs ajouter aux indices relevés plus haut que Grégoire Akindynos (vers 1300–1348), qui s'est formé à Thessalonique et y a longuement séjourné, et qui a également séjourné à l'Athos sans pouvoir se fixer dans l'un des monastères, utilise pour ses nombreuses citations des *Homélies sur le Cantique* un témoin apparenté à cette famille⁴⁹.

On peut enfin proposer quelques éléments qui permettent peut-être de remonter un peu plus haut dans l'histoire de cette famille textuelle. En effet, H. Langerbeck indique que le texte du Vat. gr. 449 est souvent proche de la version syriaque⁵⁰; l'éditeur de l'*Épitomé de Procope*, J.-M. Auwers, indique également que le texte utilisé par l'auteur se rapproche le plus souvent de celui du Vat. gr. 449⁵¹; or Procope était actif à Gaza. On pourrait donc être tenté d'attribuer une origine syro-palestinienne à l'état textuel concerné. On est de toute façon bien loin d'une recension expurgée au plan théologique réalisée au patriarcat de Constantinople, comme le voulait H. Langerbeck; l'accord de Σ, pour certaines des corrections « doctrinales », avec la version syriaque ou d'autres témoins grecs montre bien qu'il ne faut pas attribuer nécessairement une telle démarche à l'autorité centrale, qui n'a jamais joué un tel rôle dans le monde byzantin. En revanche, un tel lissage du texte peut très bien être intervenu en milieu monastique, par exemple à l'Athos ou en Syrie-Palestine. Les variantes de ces témoins regagnent ainsi une certaine autorité qu'avait voulu leur ôter l'éditeur, et leur accord avec le syriaque n'est probablement pas fortuit et conduit à faire remonter haut l'origine de cette famille.

On voit par ces deux exemples que les tentatives de H. Langerbeck pour situer les familles de la tradition textuelle dans un cadre historique et géographique, pour méritoires qu'elles aient été, doivent être prises avec beaucoup de précaution. Le travail à mener est encore immense, mais on notera cependant que les rapprochements proposés ici conduisent à ne pas valoriser forcément, dans l'établissement du texte, les mêmes groupes de manuscrits que

49 Voir en particulier les deux réfutations éditées par J. Nadal Cañellas: *Gregorii Acindyni Refutationes duae operis Gregorii Palamae cui titulus Dialogus inter orthodoxum et barlaamitam* (CCSG 31), Turnhout, Leuven 1995. On relèvera par exemple les leçons suivantes (les sigles employés sont ceux de l'édition de Langerbeck): 87,7 (III 65,19–22): τῆς πίστεως cum Σ || 133,7–10 (I 59,16–20): ἐκφωνεῖται cum SVC (I 59,19). || 322,9–323,1 (II 56,18–29): 10 ταῦτα + δὲ cum Σ Syr | 12 τοῦτου: τουτων cum Σ || 323,1–323,7 (II 56,32–38): 5 τε καὶ καταλαμβανομένου om. cum SΘΣP || 402,10–16 (III 80,42–48): 12 om. τὴν (cum ΣPV C) | 14 ἐλευθέρια (cum ΣPVT). Je n'ai en revanche relevé aucune leçon incompatible avec Σ.

50 Langerbeck, xxxi–xxxiii.

51 J.-M. Auwers, *L'interprétation du Cantique des cantiques à travers les chaînes exégétiques grecques* (Instrumenta patristica et mediaevalia 56), Turnhout 2011, 291–295.

ceux qu'avait préférés Langerbeck, ni à porter le même jugement sur les orientations propres à telle ou telle famille.

2 *Chaînes exégétiques*

Venons-en maintenant à des témoins indirects, mais essentiels pour la diffusion des *Homélies sur le Cantique* : les chaînes exégétiques.

Les chaînes sur le *Cantique* ne sont pas excessivement nombreuses, au regard par exemple des chaînes sur les *Psaumes*. On en recense cinq types principaux, dégagés tant par G. Karo et I. Lietzmann que par M. Faulhaber, ainsi qu'un nombre raisonnable de formes isolées, dont R. Ceulemans a entrepris l'étude⁵². Parmi les formes principales, seule l'*Épitomé sur le Cantique des cantiques* de Procope de Gaza, auteur actif à la fin du 5^e et au début du 6^e siècle, a bénéficié d'une édition critique et d'une étude approfondie, toutes deux dues à Jean-Marie Auwers⁵³. La chaîne de type B² est formée à partir du commentaire en vers de Michel Psellos et des extraits du commentaire de Théodoret, ainsi que du *Commentaire des trois Pères* (B¹), lequel a été composé à partir de ceux de Grégoire et de Nil, dans l'ambiance théologique et exégétique de Maxime le Confesseur. Cette chaîne est étudiée depuis plusieurs années par Luciano Bossina, qui en prépare l'édition⁵⁴. Les chaînes de Polychronios et d'Eusèbe sont en cours d'édition par Jean-Marie Auwers, tandis que la chaîne de type A, chaîne à deux auteurs qui fait alterner les commentaires de Nil et de Grégoire, a été largement utilisée par les éditeurs du commentaire de Nil, Marie-Gabriel Guérard et Hans-Udo Rosenbaum⁵⁵, pour lequel la chaîne est une source majeure, et à titre secondaire par Langerbeck⁵⁶. Il faut maintenant

52 La présentation la plus claire et à ce jour la plus complète du dossier se trouve dans R. Ceulemans, « The Catena Marciana on the *Song of Songs* », dans : P. Van Deun – C. Macé (éd.), *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium? Proceedings of the International Conference held in Leuven, 6–8 May 2009* (OLA 212), Leuven, Paris 2011, 177–209, ici 183–190. Voir également l'étude fondamentale de M. Faulhaber, *Hohelied- Proverbien- und Prediger-catenen* (Theologische Studien der Leo-Gesellschaft 4), Wien 1902.

53 J.-M. Auwers, *Procopii Gazaei Epitome in Canticum Canticorum* (CCSG 67), Turnhout 2011; Id., *L'interprétation du Cantique des cantiques à travers les chaînes exégétiques grecques*, Turnhout 2011. Voir le riche compte rendu de R. Ceulemans, *Byzantion* 82 (2012) 493–508.

54 Voir en particulier les études rassemblées dans L. Bossina, *Teodoreto restituito: Ricerche sulla catena dei Tre Padri e la sua tradizione*, Alessandria 2008, avec le compte rendu éclairant de Ceulemans, *Byzantion* 80 (2010) 506–516.

55 Voir en particulier H. Rosenbaum, *Nilus von Ankyra, Schriften. I, Kommentar zum Hohelied* (PTS 57), Berlin – New York 2004, 21–27; M.-G. Guérard, *Nil d'Ancyre, Commentaire sur le Cantique des cantiques* (SC 403), Paris 1994, 88–96.

56 Langerbeck, XLVI–LII, qui ne distingue pas clairement, cependant, les manuscrits de la chaîne à deux auteurs de ceux de la tradition directe.

y ajouter une *Catena hauniensis*, découverte par Reinhart Ceulemans (4 manuscrits) qui contient non pas un résumé de Grégoire, comme on l'a souvent dit, mais une chaîne à part entière qui entre dans le type *Catena Hauniensis*, déjà bien connu pour d'autres livres sapientiaux (*Job*, *Ecclésiaste*)⁵⁷. Il faut encore y ajouter une *Catena Cantabrigensis*⁵⁸ et la chaîne du Barb. gr. 388.

Dans chacune de ces chaînes, les *Homélies* de Grégoire sont présentes, et occupent souvent une place prépondérante. C'est le cas évidemment dans la chaîne A, où les *Homélies* de Grégoire sont citées intégralement et alternent avec le commentaire de Nil, puis sont seules à partir de Ct 4.2. Dans l'*Épitomé de Procope*, ce sont les scholies nysséennes qui occupent la plus grande place, environ un tiers de la chaîne, et ce sont aussi elles qui donnent l'orientation d'ensemble de l'exégèse, itinéraire infini de l'âme vers Dieu, que la présence d'Origène corrige quelque peu en vue d'une lecture plus ecclésiale⁵⁹. Dans les chaînes de Polychronios et du pseudo-Eusèbe, Grégoire est là aussi largement présent; leur étude détaillée, et en particulier leur comparaison avec l'*Épitomé*, reste encore à mener. Dans la chaîne de type B, les *Homélies* sont présentes de manière plus diffuse, puisqu'elles ne sont pas directement citées; toutefois, elles servent de substrat tant au *Commentaire des trois Pères* qu'au commentaire versifié de Psellos, qui en découle directement⁶⁰. Dans la *Catena Hauniensis*, enfin, on relève également une proportion importante de scholies nysséennes, qui l'a d'ailleurs longtemps fait prendre pour un simple résumé des *Homélies*. On pourrait encore mentionner des manuscrits isolés, comme l'Hagion Oros, Monè Ibèrôn, 555 (14^e s.), où le commentaire est pris à Grégoire et Philon de Carpasia.

En résumé, donc, les chaînes ont fortement contribué à transmettre et à faire connaître les *Homélies* nysséennes dans le monde byzantin, que ce soit en leur forme intégrale ou, le plus souvent, sous une forme remaniée et abrégée. Même dans le cas d'un retravail assez poussé du texte, comme dans l'*Épitomé* de Procope, l'essentiel de l'exégèse nysséenne du *Cantique* n'est pas modifiée; en revanche, tout ce qui, dans les *Homélies*, ne relève pas directement du commentaire du texte biblique y fut laissé de côté ou abrégé. Ces chaînes, dont les témoins nombreux disent bien la fortune⁶¹, ont redoublé l'ample écho des

57 R. Ceulemans, «A *Catena Hauniensis* Discovered in the Book of Canticles», *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 85 (2009) 63–70.

58 R. Ceulemans, «The *Catena Marciana* on the Song of Songs», 187–188, avec la bibliographie. Voir encore L. Bossina et A. De Blasi, «Un inedito Commento al Cantico dei Cantici nell'officina di Andrea Darmario. Edizione e storia del testo», *Byzantion* 87 (2017), 69–131.

59 Voir les remarques de J.-M. Auwers, *L'interprétation du Cantique des cantiques à travers les chaînes exégétiques grecques*, 151–152, 247–295, 488–489.

60 Voir *infra*, pp. 95–96.

61 Un rapide sondage dans la base *Pinakes* (<http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr>), dont les données ont

*Homélie*s nysséennes dont témoigne déjà le nombre important de manuscrits dans la tradition directe.

Or les chaînes exégétiques ont été traitées de manière un peu surprenante par H. Langerbeck, comme c'est souvent le cas de la tradition indirecte dans les volumes des *Gregorii Nysseni opera*; en effet, on ne trouve décrit dans sa préface que le manuscrit principal du type A, sans que l'auteur juge utile d'indiquer au lecteur qu'il s'agit d'un manuscrit d'une chaîne déjà bien connue⁶²; cependant, l'éditeur place directement dans le *stemma* de la famille vulgate, sans qu'ils soient traités dans l'introduction, d'autres témoins de la chaîne ou d'états voisins de la chaîne (ainsi pour le Marc. gr. Z. 23). L'éditeur n'a pas jugé bon de publier une étude des différents états du texte dans la chaîne A (où le texte est normalement complet) et dans des versions abrégées ou réécrites de A. Le témoignage des autres chaînes est écarté rapidement à la fin de l'introduction, comme sans intérêt pour l'établissement du texte, ce qui est peut-être vrai mais aurait pu être un peu développé et argumenté⁶³. On peut regretter que, comme souvent dans les *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, les apports d'études menées sur les traditions manuscrites d'autres textes, comme ici les chaînes, n'aient pas été utilisés pour classer les témoins et préciser leur éventuel apport à l'histoire du texte, sinon à son édition. Dans son étude de l'*Épitomé*, Jean-Marie-Auwers a d'ailleurs pu montrer que le texte utilisé par Procope était très proche de l'état textuel attesté par Σ ⁶⁴, ce qui n'est pas sans intérêt pour l'histoire du texte.

Si le témoignage des chaînes n'est pas essentiel pour établir le texte des *Homélie*s, on voit qu'il peut aider à préciser certaines étapes de son histoire, et réciproquement, que l'histoire du texte des *Homélie*s peut éclairer l'histoire des chaînes sur le *Cantique*.

3 *Tradition indirecte et réception grecque*

Après cet aperçu d'un premier type de réception, dont l'ampleur et la portée sont assez aisées à évaluer, je n'entrerai pas dans l'étude des utilisations du texte de Grégoire dans le monde byzantin, de son influence en un sens large⁶⁵:

été récemment révisées pour les chaînes sur le *Cantique*, donnent les ordres de grandeur suivants : 25 témoins pour l'*Épitomé de Procope* (dont seulement quatre sont antérieurs au 16^e s.), une trentaine pour la chaîne de Polychronios (dont près d'une quinzaine sont datables au 16^e s. ou après), et une soixantaine pour les autres types de chaîne (dont près d'une quarantaine sont datables au 16^e s. ou après), ce qui conduit à un total de plus de cent-dix témoins, complets ou partiels, pour les chaînes sur le *Cantique*.

62 Langerbeck, XLVI–XLVII.

63 Langerbeck, LXXX–LXXXI.

64 Voir *supra*, p. 90.

65 Voir par exemple une tentative à propos de l'Hymne acathiste, T. Haikka, «Gregory of

elle dépasse de loin le cadre de cette brève étude. Une voie moins ambitieuse consiste à examiner les traces immédiates des *Homélies* nysséennes, tant chez les commentateurs ultérieurs qu'à travers les citations explicites ou repérées de l'œuvre.

a Commentateurs postérieurs du Cantique

Cependant, même l'examen de la postérité des *Homélies* chez les commentateurs est complexe, du fait de l'absence d'études approfondies de la plupart de ces œuvres. On proposera ici un simple aperçu de ce vaste dossier, à partir des éléments existants⁶⁶.

Le premier commentateur du *Cantique* après Grégoire est pour nous Nil d'Ancyre, qui composa son commentaire à l'extrême fin du 4^e ou au début du 5^e s. Il semble connaître l'exégèse nysséenne, en particulier l'accent mis sur le chemin de l'âme individuelle, mais d'après les spécialistes de Nil, l'utilisation du texte nysséen est complexe, distanciée et maîtrisée : l'interprétation de Grégoire fournit un terreau, une inspiration, plus qu'une source proprement dite⁶⁷. L'édition de M.-G. Guérard signale quelques rapprochements ponctuels, mais bien peu d'échos verbaux.

Nyssa's *Canticum* behind the *Akathistos* Hymn? », *Studia patristica* 47 (2010) 63–70, qui procède par rapprochements de concepts, d'images et de thèmes. Voir également O. Sferleia, « Syméon le Nouveau Théologien comme témoin de la tradition spirituelle de Grégoire de Nysse », *Studia monastica* 54 (2012) 235–251; Id., « On the Interpretation of the Theory of Perpetual Progress (*epektasis*). Taking into Account the Testimony of Eastern Monastic Tradition », *RHE* 109 (2014) 564–587.

66 Des études assez nombreuses ont été consacrées à des lectures transversales des commentaires sur le *Cantique*, en fonction de telle thématique ou de tel verset; voir par exemple L. Welsersheimb, « Das Kirchenbild der griechischen Väterkommentare zum Hohen Lied », *ZKTh* 70 (1948) 393–449; F. Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien, Grundzüge einer Geschichte der Hoheliedauslegung des Abendlandes bis zum 1200* (Schriften der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft an der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main. Geisteswissenschaftliche Reihe 1), Wiesbaden 1958; P. Meloni, *Il profumo dell'immortalità. L'interpretazione patristica di Ct 1.3* (Verba seniorum, n.s. 7), Roma 1975. Cependant, ces travaux ont tendance à surévaluer la connaissance par les auteurs postérieurs de leurs prédécesseurs, sur la base de ces parallèles thématiques, par rapport aux conclusions des études consacrées à un auteur ou un à commentaire déterminé, qui s'appuient en général sur des liens plus sûrs.

67 M.-G. Guérard, *Nil d'Ancyre, Commentaire sur le Cantique des cantiques*, en particulier 23–24. Voir aussi S. Lucà, « L'esegesi di Nilo di Ancira sul libro dell'Ecclesiaste », *Sileno* 3 (1977) 13–39, à propos du commentaire sur l'*Ecclesiaste*: Nil utiliserait largement Didyme et Grégoire. L'édition de l'ensemble du commentaire nilien par H. Rosenbaum, *Nilus von Ankyra*, Berlin – New York 2004, a été très largement contestée, mais reste à ce jour la seule disponible pour la deuxième partie du texte.

De Philon de Carpasia, que l'on situe également à la fin du 4^e ou au début du 5^e s. et dont le commentaire est encore incomplètement édité, il est difficile de dire quoi que ce soit de probant. Les études sur l'interprétation du *Cantique* tendent à relever une influence nysséenne, mais les spécialistes de Philon n'ont que peu soulevé la question des sources⁶⁸. Il est donc difficile, à ce jour, de se prononcer sur l'éventuelle connaissance (et utilisation) des *Homélies* nysséennes par Philon.

Le cas de Théodoret est complexe, puisqu'on sait que le texte tel qu'il a été édité naguère incorpore des matériaux venus du *Commentaire des trois Pères*⁶⁹. J.-N. Guinot supposait cependant, avant même que ces résultats soient acquis, que Théodoret ne montrait aucune connaissance directe et claire du texte nysséen⁷⁰. Il faudra attendre l'édition et l'étude du texte de Théodoret pour confirmer cette position.

On trouve enfin un utilisateur assuré de Grégoire en Michel Psellos (1018–1081?). Ce très savant homme réalisa un commentaire en vers du *Cantique*⁷¹, qu'il dédia d'abord à Constantin IX Monomaque (1042–1055), puis qu'il réutilisa au profit des empereurs successifs. Son explication dérive uniquement et totalement des *Homélies* nysséennes. Le commentaire commence en Ct 1.5 et ne va pas plus loin que Grégoire, c'est-à-dire Ct 6.9. Il reprend même le texte du *Cantique* à la tradition manuscrite de Grégoire, et il se trouve en particulier très proche du Marc. gr. Z. 22, l'un des témoins de la chaîne de type A, à deux auteurs, comme l'a montré L. Bossina⁷². Or dans ce manuscrit, l'*Homélie* 1 de Grégoire est mutilée. On peut donc supposer que c'est de lui que dépend Psellos. Le commentaire versifié du savant polygraphe a eu une grande postérité : P. Moore liste une cinquantaine de manuscrits de l'œuvre⁷³, dont nombre de manuscrits

68 A. Ceresa-Gastaldo, *Filone di Carpasia, Commento al Cantico dei cantici nell'antica versione latina di Epifanio Scolastico* (Corona Patrum 6), Torino 1979. Le texte grec n'est encore disponible que dans la *PG* 40, 28–153. L'éditeur de la version latine ne dit rien des sources de l'auteur : A. Ceresa-Gastaldo, «L'esegesi biblica nel *Commento al Cantico dei cantici* di Filone di Carpasia», dans : *Forma futuri. Studi in onore del cardinale Michele Pellegrino*, Torino 1975, 79–87.

69 Voir en particulier les études réunies dans L. Bossina, *Teodoreto restituito: Ricerche sulla catena dei Tre Padri e la sua tradizione*, Alessandria 2008.

70 J.-N. Guinot, *L'exégèse de Théodoret de Cyr* (Théologie historique 100), Paris 1995, voir en particulier 634–644 : l'auteur montre que la mention des «deux Grégoire» dans le prologue n'indique pas nécessairement une connaissance directe des *Homélies* nysséennes.

71 Éd. L.G. Westerink, *Michael Psellus, Poemata*, Stuttgart – Leipzig 1992, 13–67.

72 Voir L. Bossina, *Teodoreto restituito: Ricerche sulla catena dei Tre Padri e la sua tradizione*, 129–147.

73 P. Moore, *Iter Psellianum. A Detailed Listing of Manuscript Sources for all Works Attribu-*

de la chaîne B1, puisque le commentaire versifié de Psellos a été inclus dans cette chaîne, où Grégoire est donc doublement présent, par l'intermédiaire de Psellos et par le *Commentaire des trois Pères*.

Mentionnons encore le célèbre higoumène chypriote, Néophyte le Reclus (1134-après 1214) : dans son bref commentaire du *Cantique*, il semble s'appuyer sur les chaînes plus que sur une lecture directe des auteurs ; sa connaissance de Grégoire serait donc indirecte, mais là encore, le travail est largement à mener⁷⁴. Il faudrait enfin évoquer Matthieu Cantacuzène (1325–1383/1391), qui fut un temps co-empereur, et qui est l'auteur d'un commentaire sur le *Cantique* (PG 152, 997–1084), dont l'étude reste totalement à faire.

Au terme de ce bref survol, on voit donc que la place des *Homélies* nysseennes est prépondérante dans les chaînes exégétiques, mais qu'il n'en va pas tout à fait de même dans la tradition des commentateurs postérieurs. Si Grégoire est le plus souvent connu, et sans doute utilisé, par la plupart de ses successeurs, il est loin de jouer toujours un rôle central dans leur entreprise et de constituer la trame principale de leur commentaire. L'étude de l'impact réel de son exégèse sur ses successeurs ne pourra toutefois être menée véritablement que lorsque le texte de chacun d'eux sera solidement établi et analysé.

b Tradition indirecte

Hors des commentaires sur le *Cantique* proprement dits, qu'en est-il des citations des *Homélies sur le Cantique* de Grégoire chez les auteurs postérieurs ? Sans proposer une étude détaillée de tous les lieux cités par des auteurs byzantins (ou dans des florilèges), qui aurait plus de sens sous forme de base de données qu'au sein d'un article, je voudrais simplement relever deux utilisations importantes des *Homélies* nysseennes. On gardera à l'esprit que, dans l'état actuel d'édition des textes byzantins, une telle enquête ne peut être que partielle et est limitée par l'existence d'éditions critiques avec appareil des sources ou d'études détaillées sur les textes.

L'utilisateur qui a sans doute fait le plus grand usage des *Homélies* de Grégoire est bien connu des spécialistes de manuscrits enluminés, car ses écrits ont été transmis dans de superbes volumes⁷⁵ : il s'agit du moine Jacques, mieux connu sous le nom de Jacques de Kokkinobaphos, du nom d'un monastère

ted to Michael Psellos, *Including a Comprehensive Bibliography* (Subsidia Medievalia 26), Toronto 2005, POE 2, 469–473.

74 Éd. B. St. Pseutogkas, *Ἀγίου Νεοφύτου τοῦ Ἐγκλείστου Συγγράμματα*, Δ', Paphos 2001, 563–674.

75 Voir par exemple K. Linardou, « The Kokkinobaphos manuscripts revisited: the internal evidence of the books », *Scriptorium* 61 (2007) 384–407, qui donne la bibliographie antérieure.

probablement constantinopolitain qui n'est pratiquement pas connu par ailleurs⁷⁶, auteur d'une série d'homélies sur la Mère de Dieu et de lettres adressées dans les années 1140 à la Sebastokratorissa Eirène⁷⁷. Or les lettres, qui sont en fait pour l'essentiel un centon patristique, font un très large usage des *Homélies sur le Cantique*, aux côtés, par exemple, de Jean Chrysostome. C. Laga a d'ailleurs pu montrer que leur texte se rapprochait largement de celui d'un manuscrit nysséen aujourd'hui conservé à Athènes (EBE, 448, Θ)⁷⁸, que Langerbeck datait, à la suite du catalogue de Sakkelion⁷⁹, du 15^e s., alors même que le manuscrit est de parchemin. Or il s'agit en fait d'un *codex* de la fin du 10^e s., comme l'a rappelé récemment P.G. Nikolopoulos⁸⁰. Il s'agit donc très probablement de la source de Jacques. Outre les *Lettres*, l'auteur intercale, au sein de ses *Homélies sur la Mère de Dieu*, un centon des *Homélies* nysséennes, pour servir de légende à l'une des illustrations de ce riche recueil, qui figure le lit de Salomon, entouré de ses preux⁸¹. Ce centon, présent dans les deux manuscrits principaux (Paris, BnF, gr. 1208, ff. 107^v–109; Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1162, ff. 80^v–81^v), n'avait pas été édité à ce jour et dépend lui aussi étroitement de Θ⁸². Enfin, le manuscrit parisien des *Homélies sur la Mère de Dieu* précédemment cités s'ouvre par un double portrait de Jean Chry-

76 Voir les éléments rassemblés par E. et M. Jeffreys, *Iacobi monachi Epistulae* (CCSG 68), Turnhout 2009, XXII.

77 Éd. Jeffreys, *Iacobi monachi*. Voir également les éléments d'interprétation donnés par E. Jeffreys, «Iakovos Monachos and Spiritual Encyclopedias», dans: P. Van Deun – C. Macé (éd.), *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium? Proceedings of the International Conference held in Leuven, 6–8 May 2009* (OLA 212), Leuven – Paris 2011, 231–243. Les *Homélies sur la Mère de Dieu* n'ont pas encore reçu d'édition critique (PG 127, 544–700).

78 C. Laga, «Entering the Library of Jacobus Monachus. The Exemplar of Jacobus' Quotations from the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* by Gregory of Nyssa», dans: K. Demoen – J. Vereecken (éds.), *La spiritualité de l'univers byzantin dans le verbe et l'image. Hommages offerts à Edmond Voordeckers à l'occasion de son éméritat* (Instrumenta patristica 30), Turnhout 1997, 151–161.

79 J. et A. Sakkélion, *Κατάλογος τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς Ἐθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, Ἀθήναι 1892, 85. On trouve une description beaucoup plus détaillée dans le catalogue, antérieur, de G.P. Kremos, *Κατάλογος τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς Ἐθνικῆς καὶ τῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Βιβλιοθήκης*. 1, *Θεολογία*, Ἀθήναι 1876, 175–176, mais sans datation.

80 P.G. Nikolopoulos, «Τὰ ἐν τῇ Ἐθνικῇ βιβλιοθήκῃ τῆς Ἑλλάδος χειρόγραφα Γρηγορίου Νύσσης», *Θεολογία* 79 (2008) 530–595, ici 550–555. L'éditeur des *Homélies sur l'Ecclésiaste*, P. Alexander, avait déjà remonté la datation au 11^e–12^e s. (*Gregorii Nysseni In inscriptiones Psalmorum, In sextum Psalmum, In Ecclesiasten homiliae* [GNO V], Leiden 1986, 231–234).

81 Voir K. Linardou, «The Couch of Solomon, a Monk, a Byzantine Lady, and the *Song of Songs*», dans: R.N. Swanson (ed.), *The Church and Mary. Papers read at the 2001 Summer Meeting and the 2002 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Studies in Church History 39), Woodbridge, Rochester (NY) 2004, 73–85.

82 Voir ci-dessous, Annexe.

sostome et de Grégoire de Nyssse⁸³. Ce dernier tient un livre ouvert, où se lit *Ct* 1, 2 : c'est là dire clairement l'importance de cette source pour Jacques de Kokkinobaphos. L'étude détaillée du rôle joué par les *Homélies nysséennes* dans l'écriture de Jacques, esquissée par l'éditrice des lettres, E. Jeffreys, demande encore à être approfondie⁸⁴.

Le travail d'identification des citations byzantines ne fait que commencer ; à première vue, cependant, les citations explicites des *Homélies sur le Cantique* sont plutôt rares, y compris chez un auteur comme Grégoire Palamas, au contraire de traités de controverse doctrinale comme le *Contre Eunome* ou de passages âprement discutés à propos de la procession du Saint-Esprit, qui ont été fréquemment cités par de nombreux auteurs byzantins. Sans doute les textes spirituels se prêtent mieux à la réécriture et à l'inspiration indirecte qu'à la citation précise, qui n'est indispensable que dans le cadre des débats doctrinaux. Mentionnons cependant un grand utilisateur des *Homélies sur le Cantique*, Grégoire Akindynos (vers 1300–1348), anti-palamite notoire, dans la réfutation des thèses adverses ; on a vu plus haut qu'on peut même préciser à quelle famille de manuscrits il a recouru (l'un des descendants de l'actuel Vat. gr. 449), et j'espère à l'avenir pouvoir mieux identifier encore le manuscrit qu'il a pu utiliser. D'autres utilisateurs des *Homélies* apparaîtront sûrement par la suite ; ce bref aperçu n'a pas d'autre ambition que de susciter des recherches plus approfondies, afin d'identifier de nouveaux lecteurs du texte nysséen.

III Versions orientales

L'enquête a jusqu'à présent porté sur le domaine de langue grecque ; toutefois, les *Homélies sur le Cantique* ont également connu une large diffusion dans l'Orient chrétien et une traduction, complète ou partielle, est attestée dans la plupart des langues orientales.

83 Voir J.C. Anderson, « The illustrated sermons of James the Monk : their dates, order, and place in the history of Byzantine art », *Viator* 22 (1991) 69–120, ici 72.

84 Voir en particulier E. Jeffreys, « Tapestries of Quotation : The Challenges of Editing Byzantine Texts », dans : A. Bucossi, E. Kihlman (éd.), *Ars edendi, Lecture series*, 11 (Studia latina Stockholmiensia 58), Stockholm 2012, 35–61. Voir également E. Jeffreys, « The *Song of Songs* and Twelfth Century Byzantium », 36–54 ; Ead., « Iakovos Monachos and Spiritual Encyclopedias », 236–242.

1 *Syriaque*

La traduction syriaque est sans doute la mieux connue ; elle a été étudiée dès 1939 par C. Van den Eynde et a été utilisée, quoique de manière sélective, par Langerbeck⁸⁵. Elle est assez bien diffusée (3 manuscrits complets, dont un en plusieurs fragments), en milieu syro-occidental uniquement, et sûrement ancienne, puisque le témoin le plus ancien (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. sir. 106) daterait du 6^e s. On en attend cependant toujours l'édition intégrale⁸⁶, afin de pouvoir mieux évaluer la portée du texte pour l'édition du grec, importance qui est grande comme le montre déjà le volume de Langerbeck. En outre, depuis l'étude de Van den Eynde, des parties supplémentaires du manuscrit Sinaï, Monè tès hagas Aikaterinès, syr. 19 (8^e s.) ont été identifiées et permettent de compléter plusieurs éléments, dont les pièces liminaires⁸⁷. Un trait propre au syriaque mérite d'être relevé ici car il correspond à un procédé qui n'est pas sans exemple dans les manuscrits grecs : les *Homélies* de Grégoire sont complétées, dans cette traduction, par un commentaire pris à un certain Symmaque, tout comme en grec, les *Homélies* ou les chaînes de type A sont parfois complétées par le commentaire de Théodoret, le *Commentaire des trois Pères* ou encore une chaîne de Polychronios ou du pseudo-Eusèbe, surtout dans des manuscrits récents⁸⁸. Le procédé se comprend très bien dans la mesure où les *Homélies* ne couvrent pas l'ensemble du *Cantique* : des lecteurs anciens ont donc cherché ailleurs l'exégèse de la fin du texte du biblique.

85 Voir C. Van den Eynde, *La version syriaque du commentaire de Grégoire de Nysse sur le Cantique des cantiques* (Bibliothèque du Muséon 10), Louvain 1939. Voir également Langerbeck, LXI–LXVII.

86 Plusieurs homélies ont été éditées mais restent très difficiles d'accès : voir D.G.K. Taylor, « Les Pères cappadociens dans la tradition syriaque », dans : A. Schmidt – D. Gonnet (éds.), *Les Pères grecs dans la tradition syriaque* (Études syriaques 4), Paris 2007, 43–61, ici 53 et n. 64. Voir C. Tufano, « La versione siriana dei discorsi sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa contenuta nel cod. Vat. sir. 106. Discorso XIII (gr. XII) », *Studi e ricerche sull'Oriente cristiano* 11 (1988), 63–80, 143–162 ; voir aussi Id., *La versione siriana dei discorsi sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa. Discorso XIII (gr. XII)*, Roma 1988 ; M. Luciola Campi, *La versione siriana dei discorsi sul Cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nissa*, Roma 1979 (hom. 4–6 [gr. 3–5]).

87 Voir en dernier lieu P. Géhin, *Les manuscrits syriaques de parchemin du Sinaï et leurs membra disjecta* (CSCO 665, subs. 136), Leuven 2017, 58–60, qui donne la bibliographie antérieure.

88 Voir R. Ceulemans, « New manuscripts of the catena Trium Patrum ("B2") and of the commentaries by Theodoret of Cyrillus and the Three Fathers ("B1") on the *Song of Songs* », *JÖB* 61 (2011) 105–120, ici 117–120. Ce prolongement est parfois présenté comme une 16^e homélie de Grégoire, ce qui a induit en erreur P.G. Nikolopoulos, « Εἶναι ἔργον τοῦ Γρηγορίου Νύσσης ἡ συνέχεια τῆς ἐρμηνείας εἰς τὸ ᾠσμα τῶν ᾠσμάτων », *ΕΕΒΕ* 53 (2007–2009) 467–502 ; voir la rectification développée de Ceulemans, *ibidem*.

Les auteurs syriaques ont assez largement utilisé les *Homélie*s, comme le signalait D. Taylor⁸⁹, par exemple Isho'dad de Merv (*fl. ca.* 850), mais aussi plusieurs chaînes, dont celle du moine Sévère (9^e s.)⁹⁰, ou encore Bar Hebraeus (1225/1226–1286)⁹¹. Il resterait cependant à mener une enquête systématique dans la tradition indirecte syriaque, pour mesurer vraiment cette influence; or le manque d'éditions critique rend cette étude plus difficile encore que dans le domaine byzantin.

2 Copte

En copte, on conserve seulement la traduction d'un passage de l'homélie xv (441,19–444,11); l'homélie devait probablement être complète dans le manuscrit d'origine, mais ce dernier, vu sa taille, ne contenait peut-être pas toute la série. Le *codex* est un volume de petit format provenant du Monastère blanc et daté de 1061, qui contient également le texte biblique du *Cantique* et une homélie de Sévère d'Antioche (*Hom. cat.* 60)⁹². Il s'agit d'une traduction assez littérale, qui remonte probablement à la première vague de traductions en copte et qu'on pourrait donc dater des 4^e–5^e s. Il m'est impossible de préciser la potentielle influence de ce texte dans le monde copte.

3 Arménien

En arménien, en revanche, les *Homélie*s sur le *Cantique* occupent une place importante, au moins autant qu'en syriaque. En effet, une traduction intégrale est transmise par le plus ancien manuscrit arménien non biblique daté (a. 973)⁹³, et par nombre d'autres manuscrits. En l'absence d'étude publiée sur cette traduction, il est difficile d'en dire davantage; toutefois, on peut songer à la rapprocher de la traduction des *Homélie*s sur l'*Ecclésiaste*, texte nysséen

89 D.G.K. Taylor, « Les Pères cappadociens dans la tradition syriaque », 53: « L'ouvrage en syriaque qui eut le plus d'influence ».

90 Terminée en 861 près d'Édesse; A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur mit Ausschluß der christlich-palästinensischen Texte*, Bonn 1922, 279.

91 Voir aussi les nombreux extraits relevés par M.F.G. Parmentier, « Syriac Translations of Gregory of Nyssa », *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 20 (1989) 143–193, ici 166–173.

92 *Clavis coptica* 0896: <http://www.cmcl.it/>; les fragments appartiennent au manuscrit qui s'est vu attribuer le sigle MONB CQ (voir la *clavis* citée) mais ne semblent pas avoir encore fait l'objet d'une publication. Je remercie vivement ma collègue Anne Boud'hors, qui a eu la gentillesse d'examiner cette traduction et de me communiquer ses conclusions. Voir aussi E. Lucchesi, « Regards nouveaux sur la littérature copte », dans P. Buzzi et A. Campani (éd.), *Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production and Intellectual Trends. Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi* (Studia ephemeridis Augustinianum 125), Roma 2011, 369–414, ici pp. 372–377, pour une version bohairique de l'hom. v.

93 Erevan, Matenadaran 2684; voir M.E. Stone – D. Kouymjian – H. Lehmann, *Album of Armenian Paleography*, Aarhus 2002, n° 7, 130–131.

avec lequel les *Homélies sur le Cantique* sont fréquemment transmises, et dont Françoise Vinel a naguère souligné le caractère assez ancien⁹⁴.

En outre, la traduction arménienne a eu une grande postérité : elles ont largement été utilisées par Grégoire de Narek dans son propre commentaire au 10^e s.⁹⁵, mais aussi par Vardan au 13^e s.⁹⁶, et des homélies séparées ou des extraits d'homélies ont été utilisés dans les homéliaires pour les fêtes⁹⁷, ce qui a certainement assuré aux homélies une diffusion beaucoup plus large que ce qu'on trouve en grec, similaire à la diffusion et à la réception des homélies nysséennes sur les martyrs ou sur les fêtes qui ont été intégrées dans les ménologes et les *panegyrika* byzantins.

4 Géorgien

Les *Homélies* ont également été traduites en géorgien, pendant la première moitié du 11^e s., par Georges l'Athonite, avec d'autres œuvres de Grégoire⁹⁸. L'étude de cette version avait été menée par G. Kiknadze et a été publiée récemment⁹⁹. Malheureusement, l'étude fut conduite sur le texte de la *Patrologie* et non sur l'édition de Langerbeck ; il est donc malaisé de déterminer sur quel type de manuscrit la traduction a été exécutée. En outre, il reste à évaluer quelle a été la postérité de cette traduction dans le monde géorgien.

-
- 94 F. Vinel, «La version arménienne des *Homélies sur l'Ecclésiaste* de Grégoire de Nyse», *Revue des études arméniennes* 21 (1989) 127–143.
- 95 R.W. Thomson, «Gregory of Narek's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*», *JThS* 34 (1983) 453–496. Grégoire de Narek affirme explicitement suivre le commentaire de Grégoire ; toutefois, R.W. Thompson a montré qu'il en utilise les interprétations, plus qu'il ne reprend mot à mot les *Homélies* nysséennes.
- 96 K.M. Muradjan, «La traduction arménienne du Commentaire du *Cantique des Cantiques* de Grégoire de Nyse par Vardan Areveltsi», *Istoriko-Filologičeskij Žurnal* 130 (1990) 118–126.
- 97 M. van Esbroeck, «Description du répertoire de l'homélaire de Muš (Maténadaran 7729)», *Revue des études arméniennes* 18 (1984) 237–280 : dans ce manuscrit, n° 88, on trouve un extrait de *Cant V* (GNO VI 160,10–163,17), sur Ct 2,14, pour la fête de la Présentation au Temple. On retrouve ce texte dans le Paris, BnF, arm. 110, ff. 161–162, mais aussi dans le Jérusalem, St Jacques, 1 (n° 154).
- 98 T. Dolidze – E. Kochlamazashvili, «Old Georgian Translations of Gregory of Nyssa's Works», dans : V.H. Drecoll – M. Berghaus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism. Proceedings of the nth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Tübingen, 17–20 September 2008)*, Leiden – Boston 2011, 577–592, ici 581–582.
- 99 G. Kiknadze, *St. Gregory of Nyssa, The Commentary on the Song of the Songs*, N. Melikishvili (éd.), Tbilisi, 2013 (en géorgien).

5 *Arabe*

Une traduction arabe a été réalisée à la période médiévale et est conservée dans des manuscrits dont le plus ancien semble dater du 14^e s. À ma connaissance, elle n'a pas été étudiée à ce jour, ni éditée. Une deuxième traduction a été réalisée à Rome par Raphael Tuki¹⁰⁰ en 1763, à partir de la version latine publiée¹⁰¹. La réception de ces deux traductions reste totalement inconnue.

6 *Slavon*

Enfin, dans le monde slave, on ne disposerait que d'une traduction partielle, au sein d'une chaîne exégétique d'origine grecque traduite en Bulgarie au 10^e s., mais dont le modèle n'a pas été identifié¹⁰².

On voit donc que les *Homélies* ont connu une très large diffusion dans l'Orient chrétien; elles ont constitué l'une des sources principales où les commentateurs ultérieurs du *Cantique* ont puisé dans les mondes syriaque et arménien, et probablement aussi dans le domaine géorgien, au même titre que dans le monde grec. Si toutes les langues n'ont pas connu une égale diffusion du texte de Grégoire, et si la postérité exacte des *Homélies* nysséennes dans chacun de ces domaines linguistiques et culturels doit encore faire l'objet d'études détaillées, il n'en demeure pas moins que les *Homélies sur le Cantique* sont sans conteste l'une des œuvres de Grégoire que les chrétientés d'Orient ont le plus traduites et le mieux connues, et qui a de ce fait largement transmis sa doctrine spirituelle et théologique, laquelle y est rassemblée sous sa forme la plus aboutie.

100 1701–1787, copte orthodoxe converti au catholicisme, il fut enseignant au Collegio Urbano di Propaganda Fide. Voir par exemple D.J. Melling, S.H. Griffith, « Raphael Tuki », dans : *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*, Blackwell Reference Online, 2001, http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode.html?id=g9780631232032_chunk_g978063123203222_ssi-3.

101 Voir G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*. I, *Die Übersetzungen* (Studi e testi 118), Città del Vaticano 1944, 332–333; IV, *Die Schriftsteller von der Mitte des 15. bis zum Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Syrer, Armenier, Kopte, *Missionsliteratur, Profanliteratur* (Studi e testi 147), Città del Vaticano 1951, 161 (tr. Tuki).

102 Voir L. Sels, « The Slav Reception of Gregory of Nyssa's Works: An Overview of Early Slavonic Translations », dans : V.H. Drecoll – M. Berghaus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: the Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism*, 593–608, ici 599–600.

IV Réception du texte en Occident: du Quattrocento aux éditions parisiennes

Les *Homélies sur le Cantique* ne semblent en revanche pas avoir été traduites en latin à date ancienne, même si au moins un extrait a circulé en Occident dans le cadre des controverses autour de l'iconoclasme et est attesté dans les actes du synode parisien de 825¹⁰³. Les commentateurs latins médiévaux du *Cantique* ne semblent pas avoir connu directement les *Homélies* nysséennes, pas plus Grégoire le Grand¹⁰⁴ que Guillaume de Saint-Thierry¹⁰⁵ ou Bernard de Clairvaux. Il faut en fait attendre les années 1570 pour voir paraître les deux seules traductions latines du texte, ce qui est assez tardif par rapport à d'autres œuvres de Grégoire¹⁰⁶.

-
- 103 Pour la citation au concile de Nicée II, voir *Actes de Nicée II*, éd. E. Lamberz (ACO II.3.1), Berlin – New York 2008, 136–137, avec les références aux parallèles latins. Pour la citation au synode parisien de 825, voir *Concilia aevi Karolini*, éd. A. Werminghoff (MGH, Concilia II.2), Hanover, Leipzig 1908, 513. Voir également A. Alexakis, *Codex Parisinus graecus 115 and its Archetype* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 34), Washington 1996, 154–156, dont les interprétations doivent cependant être corrigées en fonction des résultats de l'édition d'E. Lamberz citée *supra*.
- 104 R. Bélanger, *Grégoire le Grand, Commentaire sur le Cantique des cantiques* (SC 314), Paris 1984, 29–49, dans son étude des sources, s'étend longuement sur Origène, mais ne dit pas un mot de Grégoire de Nysse. Voir l'opinion contraire de Meloni, *Il profumo*, cité n. 58, 335, qui considère Origène et Grégoire de Nysse comme sources évidentes de Grégoire le Grand.
- 105 Le sujet semble débattu: voir l'introduction de J.-M. Déchanet à l'édition de *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, Exposé sur le Cantique des cantiques* (SC 82), Paris 1962, qui ne fait aucune mention de Grégoire de Nysse, tandis que le même auteur, quelques années plus tard (*Guillaume de Saint-Thierry. Aux sources d'une pensée*, Paris 1978, 65–66), fait l'hypothèse que Guillaume aurait pu avoir connaissance des *Homélies* par l'intermédiaire de Jean Scot Érigène. Toutefois, ce dernier ne semble pas avoir connu les *Homélies* nysséennes: voir par exemple E. Jeauneau, *Études érigéniennes* (Études augustiniennes, Moyen-Âge et Temps modernes 18), Paris 1987, en particulier 38–41 qui ne fait à aucun moment mention des *Homélies sur le Cantique*, ou encore l'index de l'édition du *Periphyseon* de Jean Scot Érigène par le même E. Jeauneau ([*Corpus christianorum continuatio medievalis* 161–165], Turhnout 1996–2003), qui ne fournit qu'un seul renvoi aux *Homélies*.
- 106 Les chaînes sur le *Cantique* n'ont pas non plus précédé les *Homélies* elles-mêmes, puisque la première édition, due à Johannes Meursius (1579–1639), date de 1617 (*Eusebii, Polychronii, Pselli, in Canticum Canticorum expositiones graece...*, Leiden 1617) et n'est pas accompagnée d'une traduction latine (chaîne de Polychronios et du pseudo-Eusèbe). Il fallut ensuite attendre le 19^e s. pour que la chaîne de Procope soit publiée par Angelo Mai (*Classici auctores*, IX, Roma 1937, 257–430).

1 *D'Ambrogio Traversari aux premières traductions latines*

Un tel retard ne signifie pas que le texte n'ait pas suscité d'intérêt auparavant, comme en témoignent les lettres échangées entre Ambrogio Traversari et Niccolò Niccoli en 1423–1424 à propos du manuscrit aujourd'hui conservé à la Laurentienne (plut. 7.30), où Traversari dit son grand intérêt pour le texte nysséen¹⁰⁷; le volume avait été envoyé de Crète à Niccoli par Cristoforo Buondelmonti, lequel l'avait acquis en 1415¹⁰⁸. Le manuscrit avait été déposé par Niccoli chez Traversari pour qu'il le décrive, avec d'autres livres¹⁰⁹. Une fois entré à San Marco avec les manuscrits de Niccoli, le volume fut encore lu et annoté par le savant bibliothécaire Zanobi Acciaiuoli, au tout début du 16^e s.¹¹⁰ Toutefois, ces lectures n'aboutirent ni à une traduction ni à une publication du texte grec¹¹¹.

C'est dans la seconde moitié du 16^e s. que l'intérêt pour le texte semble renaître: on dénombre une vingtaine de copies qui ont été réalisées pendant ce siècle et qui sont encore conservées, auxquelles il faut ajouter au moins deux manuscrits non localisés à ce jour, qui ont servi à la préparation de l'édition de 1615¹¹², ainsi que deux (ou peut-être une) copies occidentales du 16^e s. aujourd'hui détruites¹¹³. Il est surtout notable que ce processus de dif-

107 Firenze, Bibl. Laurenziana, plut. 7.30 (voir *supra*, 78–79, 86). Ambrogio Traversari, *Latinae epistolae...*, Firenze 1759, VIII, 3 (II, col. 355–358) et VIII, 5 (II, col. 359–361). Voir Ch.L. Stinger, *Humanism and the Church Fathers: Ambrogio Traversari (1386–1439) and the Revival of Patristic Theology in the Early Italian Renaissance*, Albany 1977, 1, 14, 141, 151–152. Voir aussi M. Pontone, *Ambrogio Traversari*, cité n. 5, 6 et 25.

108 Voir sa *Descriptio insule Crete et liber insularum, cap. XI: Creta*, éd. M.-A. Van Spitael, Herakleio, 1981, 34–35, 175, 281–282. Voir aussi P. Petitmengin, L. Ciccolini, «Jean Matal et la bibliothèque Saint-Marc de Florence (1545)», *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 46 (2005) 207–374, ici p. 271, 315, 323–324. Pour l'histoire de la bibliothèque de Niccoli, voir B.L. Ullman – Ph.A. Stadter, *The Public Library of Renaissance Florence. Niccolò Niccoli, Cosimo de' Medici and the Library of San Marco* (Medioevo e Umanesimo 10), Padova 1972.

109 S. Gentile, «Traversari e Niccoli, Pico e Ficino: Note in margine ad alcuni manoscritti dei Padri», dans: M. Cortesi – C. Leonardi (eds.), *Tradizione patristiche nell'Umanesimo. Atti del convegno, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Firenze, 6–8 febbraio 1997* (Millennio Medievale 17, Atti di Convegni 4), Firenze 2000, 81–118, ici 92.

110 M.C. Vicario, «Zanobi Acciaiuoli e i Padri della Chiesa: autografi e traduzioni», dans: M. Cortesi – C. Leonardi (eds.), *Tradizione patristiche nell'Umanesimo*, 119–158, ici 132.

111 Voir la notice dans S. Gentile, *Umanesimo e Padri della Chiesa: manoscritti e incunabili di testi patristici da Francesco Petrarca al primo Cinquecento: Bibliotheca Medicea Laurenziana*, Roma 1997, 50, 191–194.

112 Voir Langerberck, LVII–LX.

113 El Escorial, Real Biblioteca, H. III. 18 (chaîne?); A. II. 5 (ff. 1–34).

fusion au 16^e s. est relativement concentré dans le temps et l'espace, et lié à un atelier de copie bien particulier. En effet, une dizaine de ces manuscrits a été copiée pendant la deuxième moitié du 16^e s. dans le nord de l'Italie, et les livres ont été diffusés, à partir de l'atelier d'André Darmarios, à destination des prélats qui étaient réunis à l'occasion du concile de Trente et, plus largement, des ecclésiastiques qui se trouvaient dans les parages¹¹⁴. Il semble bien que le point de départ de cette activité de copie ait été l'actuel manuscrit de Leiden, Vulcanius 6 (2^{de} moitié du 12^e s.)¹¹⁵; on ne sait où il fut acquis par Bonaventura Vulcanius (1538–1614)¹¹⁶. Il est certain, cependant, qu'il s'agit d'une partie, aujourd'hui détachée, du manuscrit Torino, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, C. I. 11, dont on sait qu'il a largement servi de modèle pour des copies de textes nysséens au 16^e s., tant dans l'atelier de Darmarios que pour d'autres groupes de copistes proches de celui-ci¹¹⁷. La séparation est donc intervenue après l'utilisation massive du manuscrit en Italie du Nord: il resterait à en préciser le contexte et la date. On peut d'ailleurs assurer que Vulcanius possédait déjà le manuscrit en janvier 1576, puisqu'il demandait alors à Théodore de Bèze de lui communiquer son manuscrit des *Homélies sur le Cantique* pour le comparer à son propre exemplaire¹¹⁸. Il est donc probable qu'il l'a acquis alors qu'il était

-
- 114 Voir Langerbeck, XLI–XLV. Il s'agit des manuscrits: Basel, BU, A.III.11 (partiellement copié par André Darmarios [RGK I 13, II 21, III 22] et Nicolas Choniâtès [RGK I 321, II 439, III 521]); Bologna, Bibl. dell'Archiginnasio, A 7 (copié par l'*Anonyme B* parmi les collaborateurs de Jean Choniâtès, voir E. Gamillscheg, «Bemerkungen zu Handschriftensubskriptionen», *JÖB* 33 (1983) 255–265, ici 260 n. 25); El Escorial, Real Biblioteca, Y. II. 2 (copié par Nicolas Choniâtès); Ω. III. 3 (copié dans l'atelier de Darmarios); London, British Library, Royal 16.D.XI (copié par Michel Mirokephalîtès [RGK I 284, II 389, III 466] et Nicolas Choniâtès [RGK I 321, II 439, III 521], avec interventions de Darmarios); Madrid, BN, 4861 (partiellement copié par Antonios Calosynas [RGK I 25, III 39]); Paris, BnF, gr. 588 (copié par Michel Mirokephalîtès et André Darmarios); gr. 1005 (qui n'est pas de la main de Darmarios, voir RGK II 21); suppl. gr. 44 (copié par Nicolas et Jean Choniâtès [RGK I 192, II 254, III 316]); Torino, BNU, B.III.35.
- 115 P.C. Molhuysen, *Bibliotheca Universitatis Leidensis. Codices manuscripti*. 1, *Codices Vulcaniani*, Leiden 1910, 4.
- 116 Sur le personnage et son réseau érudit, voir en dernier lieu H. Cazes (éd.), *Bonaventura Vulcanius: Works and Networks, Brugge 1588 – Leiden 1614* (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 194), Leiden – Boston 2010.
- 117 Je reviendrai plus longuement sur l'appartenance originelle du manuscrit de Leiden au manuscrit de Turin. Pour l'utilisation du manuscrit turinois par l'atelier de Darmarios, voir en particulier les éléments réunis par Gamillscheg, «Bemerkungen», cité n. 107.
- 118 Voir E. Ledegang-Keegstra, «Vulcanius et le réformateur Théodore de Bèze», dans: H. Cazes (éd.), *Bonaventura Vulcanius: Works and Networks*, 147–165, ici 158–159. La traduction de l'extrait de lettre par E. Ledegang-Keegstra et son interprétation ne sont cependant pas tenables: le manuscrit de Leiden n'est pas celui de Théodore de Bèze, dont le

secrétaire et bibliothécaire du cardinal Francisco de Mendoza (soit entre 1559 et 1566), possiblement lors d'un déplacement en Italie en compagnie de son patron. Comme les copies réalisées dans l'entourage de Darmarios, cette acquisition par Bonaventure Vulcanius et la demande qu'il avait adressée à Théodore de Bèze témoignent de l'intérêt que le texte nysséen suscitait à l'époque; il est probable d'ailleurs que Vulcanius souhaitait en donner une édition, d'où son travail préparatoire¹¹⁹.

2 *Bâle, Paris, Augsbourg*

C'est pendant cette même période que deux traductions latines virent le jour¹²⁰: en 1571, Johannes Löwenklau¹²¹ publia la première traduction latine des *Homélie*s, dans un volume paru à Bâle qui reprenait les traductions de Sifanus publiées en 1562 dans la même ville, complétées par plusieurs traductions de Löwenklau (*Homiliae in Canticum, De opificio hominis et Epistula* 1). Le manuscrit utilisé par le traducteur n'a pas été identifié. Deux ans plus tard, en 1573, une traduction de Gentien Hervet¹²² parut à Paris dans une nouvelle édition composite, qui reprend l'édition bâloise de 1571 en ajoutant plusieurs textes et

sort est inconnu, mais bien l'exemplaire de Vulcanius que celui-ci mentionne dans sa lettre (*cum meo exemplari contulero*); Vulcanius ne demande pas à Bèze une copie de son manuscrit, mais que celui-ci le lui prête. Voir le texte des lettres dans H. de Vries de Heekelingen, *Correspondance de Bonaventura Vulcanius pendant son séjour à Cologne, Genève et Bâle (1573–1577), précédée de quelques lettres écrites avant cette époque*, La Haye 1923, n° 51, 126–129, avec la n. 1, p. 128, qui signale bien que le Vulc. 6 est l'exemplaire personnel de Vulcanius, qu'il a collationné avec celui de Théodore de Bèze; voir également H. Aubert, A. Dufour, B. Nicollier, R. Bodenmann, *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*. xvii, 1576 (Société du Musée historique de la Réformation), Genève 1994, n° 1577, 1–4 (avec les n. 10–11): «*De Gregorio Nysseno in Cantica canticorum si quid statueris, hoc est mihi ejus copiam ad hebdomadas duas aut tres commode facere potes, Goulartio eum trades. Nam ad illum scribo ut vasculum librorum quod apud Lertutium bibliopolam reliqui mihi transmitti curet. Curabo ut, simulac eum cum meo exemplari contulero, quam citissime ad te redeat*». Je reviendrai plus amplement sur cet échange et sur les divers manuscrits concernés.

119 Sur les éditions grecques de Bonaventure Vulcanius, voir Th.M. Conley, «Vulcanius as editor: The Greek Texts», dans: H. Cazes (éd.), *Bonaventura Vulcanius: Works and Networks*, 337–350.

120 Voir H. Brown-Witcher, «Gregorius Nyssenus», dans: F.E. Cranz – P.O. Kristeller (éd.), *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum: Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations*, v, Washington 1984, 1–250, ici 74–78.

121 1541–1594; voir D. Metzler, «Löwenklau, Johannes», *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 15 (1987) 95–96 (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/ppn100188826.html>).

122 1499–1584; voir J.-F. Maillard *et alii*, *La France des humanistes*, 1 (Europa humanistica), Turnhout 1999, 185–276, et 245–246 pour la présente édition.

en remplaçant certaines traductions¹²³; la version d'Hervet est incomplète et s'interrompt peu avant la fin de l'homélie XI, car le manuscrit dont disposait le traducteur était lui-même incomplet¹²⁴. L'édition parisienne complète donc la traduction d'Hervet par celle de Löwenklau pour les homélies XII–XV: ce sera toujours le cas par la suite, et ce jusqu'à la *Patrologia graeca*: en cette période où les luttes confessionnelles sont vives, on préfère publier à Paris (puisque toutes les éditions majeures de Grégoire paraissent dans cette ville à partir du dernier quart du 16^e s.) une traduction qui est l'œuvre d'un catholique, même si elle est incomplète, et n'utiliser une traduction protestante que pour combler ce manque, au risque d'incohérences non négligeables, plutôt que de recourir de bout en bout au travail de Löwenklau¹²⁵.

Ce n'est qu'en 1615 que le texte grec fut enfin publié, par Fronton du Duc, dans un contexte de pénurie relative des sources; l'éditeur ne disposait tout d'abord que d'un manuscrit mutilé (Homélies I–XI) et lacuneux – similaire donc, et peut-être identique, à celui qu'avait employé peu de temps auparavant Gentien Hervet – et n'a pu utiliser qu'à partir de l'homélie II un manuscrit complet et comblant certaines lacunes. Aucun de ces deux manuscrits n'a été repéré: ni le premier, envoyé par Andreas Schott à Claude Morel, ni le second, reçu de François Olivier, n'ont été retrouvés à ce jour; il est possible qu'ils aient été détruits dans le processus même de publication¹²⁶. C'est pourtant cette édition composite, tant pour le texte grec que pour la traduction latine qui l'accompagnait, qui est demeurée la seule disponible jusqu'à la publication critique du texte grec par H. Langerbeck en 1960.

123 Pour une description de cette édition complexe, voir en particulier Brown-Witcher, «Gregorius Nyssenus» (cité n. 120), 40.

124 En effet, le manuscrit de Leiden, Vulc. 6, dont on a vu qu'il était à l'origine de l'essentiel des copies du XVI^e s., est mutilé dans le courant de l'homélie XII (342, 7), et ses copies s'arrêtent donc également à cet endroit. Hervet, qui utilisait un manuscrit de cette famille, a ainsi terminé sa traduction à la fin de la dernière homélie complète.

125 Sur la place de la compétition, pour ne pas dire du conflit, entre les différentes confessions chrétiennes dans les processus d'édition de texte à la période moderne, voir J.-L. Quantin, «Les jésuites et l'érudition anglicane», *XVII^e siècle* 237 (2007) 691–711 (en particulier 708–709); Id., «Du Chrysostome latin au Chrysostome grec. Une histoire européenne (1588–1613)», dans: M. Wallraff – R. Brändle (éd.), *Chrysostomosbilder in 1600 Jahren. Facetten der Wirkungsgeschichte eines Kirchenvaters* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 105), Berlin – New York 2008, 267–346.

126 Pour le processus d'édition, voir Langerbeck, LVII–LX, qui cite les préfaces et avertissements de l'édition de 1615, lesquels fournissent l'essentiel des renseignements dont nous disposons. L'éditeur n'a pas poussé jusqu'au bout la recherche des modèles de l'édition parisienne, du fait de l'absence de collation complète des témoins récents.

D'autres se sont sans doute essayés à publier le texte des *Homélies*: on connaît l'intérêt de David Höschel (1556–1617)¹²⁷ pour les textes patristiques, et en particulier pour ceux de Grégoire de Nysse. À la fin du petit volume paru en 1591, qui contient le texte grec du *De deitate Filii et Spiritus sancti*, Höschel dresse une liste des œuvres nysséennes qu'il connaît, à partir des manuscrits d'Augsbourg, de la liste que lui a communiquée Maxime Margounios et des livres qu'il possédait lui-même. Les *Homélies* sont les dernières sur la liste, et ne sont connues d'Höschel que par la traduction latine de Löwenklau¹²⁸. Mais il n'avait pas renoncé pour autant: le *Monac. gr.* 528 fut copié pour lui sur l'un des manuscrits de Tübingen et lui parvint entre 1595 et 1600¹²⁹. Cependant, comme tant des projets d'Höschel, l'édition n'aboutit pas. Le texte grec aurait pu être connu avec quelques dix ans d'avance sur l'édition parisienne.

Conclusion

Alors que le vingtième siècle a connu un engouement incomparable pour ces *Homélies*, où les lecteurs ont trouvé la quintessence de la théologie spirituelle nysséenne, l'influence du texte est beaucoup plus malaisée à discerner dans l'Antiquité tardive puis au Moyen-Âge. Puisque les *Homélies* se prêtent bien moins à la citation directe que les œuvres doctrinales, leur diffusion se mesure par l'abondance relative des manuscrits qui les ont conservées, par leur intégration dans les chaînes exégétiques, par les traductions dans les langues orientales. Pour mieux mesurer leur influence au sein de la spiritualité byzantine, il faudrait enquêter dans les florilèges spirituels, afin de voir si elles y ont laissé des traces importantes. L'exemple de Jacques de Kokkinobaphos témoigne de leur influence en milieu monastique, de même que les quelques

127 Sur Höschel, voir Quantin, «Du Chrysostome...», cité n. 125, 289–300, et les notices de L. Lenk, «Höschel, David», *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 9 (1972) 368–369 (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/ppn118705695.html>) et H. Kämmer, «Hoeschel, David», *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 13 (1881) 176–177 (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/ppn118705695.html?anchor=adb>).

128 *Oratio S. Gregorii, Episcopi Nysseni, De Filii et Spiritus sancti Deitate. e codicis m.s. Reipublicae Augustanae nitori atque integritati restituta. Studio et opera Davidis Hoeschelii*, (Augustae Vindelicorum) A. M. D. CXI, (B8): «μβ', εἰς τὰ ἄσματα τῶν ἁσμάτων, λόγοι λε'. Latine extant, interprete Ioan. Leuenclauio».

129 Pour la date d'arrivée du manuscrit à Augsbourg et la caractérisation de la main qui l'a copié, voir D.F. Jackson, «Augsburg Greek Manuscript Acquisitions 1545–1600», *Codices Manuscripti* 29 (2000) 1–10, ici p. 10: le manuscrit est arrivé entre 1595 et 1600 et est dû à une main allemande très proche de celle de Höschel.

manuscripts liés au mont Athos, mais ce ne sont là encore que des bribes isolées. De même, le témoignage porté par le manuscrit de Tübingen, Mb 7 dans la première moitié du 15^e s. d'une lecture à Thessalonique dans le cercle du métropolite Syméon entrouvre une fenêtre sur un autre usage du texte, au sein d'un cercle tout à la fois érudit et religieux. Au bout de la chaîne de réception, l'intérêt occidental pour l'œuvre est manifeste, mais une fois de plus, les fils précis qui conduisent à l'édition parisienne de 1615, et même les manuscrits utilisés par les traducteurs de la deuxième moitié du 16^e s., nous échappent encore.

En amont des *Homélies*, les sources les plus évidentes de Grégoire sont repérées depuis longtemps : Origène fournit la trame du commentaire nysséen, mais l'exégèse origénienne est profondément retravaillée par l'évêque de Nysse, qui y a imprimé sa marque. Il n'est donc pas étonnant que l'on rencontre de larges échos des œuvres antérieures de Grégoire dans ces *Homélies*, qui constituent comme l'aboutissement de la pensée nysséenne. Cependant, seule une comparaison détaillée et linéaire du commentaire origénien – avec les limites qu'imposent à une telle entreprise les modalités de la transmission de l'œuvre, connue seulement par la traduction latine de Rufin et par des extraits dans les chaînes exégétiques – avec les *Homélies* nysséennes permettrait de mettre en évidence, point par point, les inflexions et innovations de Grégoire, mais également de découvrir d'autres sources moins évidentes, et largement passées inaperçues jusqu'à ce jour.

Annexe : Centon nysséen de Jacques de Kokkinobaphos sur la couche de Salomon

Dans les deux manuscrits Paris, BnF, gr. 1208 (ff. 107^v–109) et Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1162 (ff. 80^v–81^v), le texte suivant sert d'introduction à la représentation de la couche de Salomon, entourée des 60 preux, qui figure entre les homélies III et IV, et fournit une explication allégorique de la représentation figurée. Il n'y a aucune variante entre les deux témoins grecs principaux. Le texte de Jacques est formé en sa presque totalité par un centon de la sixième homélie nysséenne sur le *Cantique* (et accessoirement de la première et de la troisième). Dans l'édition qui suit – et qui, sauf erreur de ma part, n'a pas d'antécédent – les éléments propres à l'auteur du centon figurent en italique ; les références au texte nysséen sont données à la fin de la section concernée. Les variantes par rapport au texte de Grégoire, ainsi que les quelques éléments qui permettent de confirmer la dépendance de Jacques vis-à-vis du manuscrit d'Athènes (EBE, 448, sigle Θ ; les sigles employés

pour les manuscrits nysséens sont ceux de Langerbeck) sont données en note ; dans les sections citées, jamais Θ ne présente une leçon différente du texte de Jacques.

Ἡ μὲν κλίνη πρῶτον μὲν εἰκόνιζε τὴν ὑπεραγίαν θεοτόκον, ἔπειτα δὲ ἐνός ἐκάστου ψυχὴν τῶν σωζομένων. διὸ καὶ ἡ σοφία ἔλεγεν· ἰδοὺ ἡ κλίνη τοῦ Σολομῶντος, ἐξήκοντα δυνατοὶ κύκλω αὐτῆς ἀπὸ δυνατῶν Ἰσραήλ, πάντες κατέχοντες ῥομφαίαν, δεδιδαγμένοι πόλεμον¹³⁰. ὅτι¹³¹ οὖν οὐκ ἐκ τῆς ἱστορίας ὁ περὶ τῆς κλίνης λόγος ἐστί, παντὶ δῆλον ἂν γένοιτο διὰ τῶν σωματικῶς περὶ τοῦ Σολομῶντος ἱστορηθέντων, οὗ καὶ τὰ βασίλεια καὶ τὴν τράπεζαν καὶ τὴν λοιπὴν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ διαγωγὴν μετὰ πάσης ἀκριβείας ὁ λόγος ὑπέγραψε. καινὸν δέ τι καὶ παρηλλαγμένον εἶπεν περὶ τῆς κλίνης οὐδέν (190,6–15). οὐκοῦν εὐδὴλον ὅτι ἄλλος Σολομῶν διὰ τούτου σημαίνεται, ὁ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ τὸ κατὰ σάρκα γενόμενος, ᾧ ὄνομα εἰρήνη, ὁ ἀληθινὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ βασιλεὺς (I, 17,1–3). τούτου χάριν μία κλίνη τοῦ βασιλέως γίνεται πᾶν τὸ σωζόμενον (197,5–6). καλῶς τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν σωζομένων τῷ ἀριθμῷ τῶν ἐξήκοντα κεφαλαιοῦται (197,9–11). χρὴ τοίνυν τὰς πέντε αἰσθήσεις¹³² φοβεροὺς ὀπλομάχους φύλακας τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως κλίνης γενέσθαι (195,9–11). διότι τῶν ἐξήκοντα ὁ ἀριθμὸς τὸ ἀκαταγώνιστον δηλοῖ τῆς ψυχῆς, ἐπεὶ ἀνακεφαλαιοῦμεν αἱ πέντε ἀνά δώδεκα, πληροῦσι τὸν ἐξήκοντα ἀριθμόν. θάμβον¹³³ καὶ ἔκπληξιν ἐμποιοῦσι τοῖς σκοτεινοῖς λογισμοῖς τοῖς ἐν νυξί τε καὶ σκοτομῇ τοῖς εὐθέσι¹³⁴ τῇ καρδίᾳ λογχώσιν τε καὶ τοξεύουσιν (192,10–12). ὀφθαλμοῦ ῥομφαία τὸ διαπαντὸς ὁρᾶν πρὸς τὸν κύριον καὶ ὀρθὰ βλέπειν καὶ μηδενὶ τῶν ῥυπαρῶν θεαμάτων καταμολύνεσθαι. ἀκοῆς ὅπλον ὡσαύτως ἡ τῶν θείων δογμάτων¹³⁵ ἀκρόασις καὶ τὸ μηδέποτε μάταιον λόγον ἐν αὐτῇ¹³⁶ παραδέξασθαι. οὕτως ἐστὶν ὀπλίσι καὶ τὴν γεῦσιν καὶ τὴν ἀφῆν καὶ τὴν ὁσφρησιν τὰ¹³⁷ τῆς ἐγκρατείας ῥομφαία καταλλήλως ἐκάστην τῶν αἰσθήσεων θωρακίζοντα τὸν στρατιώτην, δι’ ὧν γίνεται θάμβος καὶ ἔκπληξις τοῖς σκοτεινοῖς ἐχθροῖς, ὧν καιρὸς εἰς τὴν κατὰ τῶν ψυχῶν ἐπιβουλήν ἢ νύξ γίνεται καὶ τὸ σκότος (196,2–11) τῶν παθῶν. οὐκοῦν πάντες οἱ τὴν θείαν ἐνδυσάμενοι πανοπλίαν μίαν κυκλοῦσι τοῦ βασιλέως κλίνην (197,13–14)

130 Ct 3,7–8. Jacques omet la fin du verset, citée par Grégoire : ἀνὴρ ῥομφαία αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν μηρόν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ θάμβους ἐν νυξίν.

131 Le texte nysséen a μὲν ἀπὸς δὲ.

132 Grégoire : πέντε ἀφ’ ἐκάστης φυλῆς ; la modification est rendue nécessaire par les coupures introduites par Jacques.

133 θάμβος Nys. : θάμβον Θ.

134 τοὺς εὐθεῖς Nys. : τοῖς εὐθέσι Θ.

135 διδαγμάτων Nys. : δογμάτων ΛΥΣΘ.

136 ἐαυτῇ Nys. : αὐτῇ ERaYΘ.

137 τῇ Nys. : τὰ Θ.

μία παράταξις καὶ στρατὸς εἷς καὶ μία κλίνη, τουτέστιν ἐκκλησία μία καὶ λαὸς εἷς καὶ νύμφη μία, οἱ πάντες γενήσονται ὑφ' ἐνὶ ταξίάρχῃ καὶ ἐκκλησιαστῇ καὶ νυμφίῳ πρὸς ἐνὸς σώματος κοινωνίαν συναρμολογούμενοι (197,17–198,2). ὡς μακάριον τὸ ἐν τούτοις εὐρεθῆναι (198,19–199,1) ὀπλίτην ἐν ἀπαθείᾳ καὶ καθαρότητι τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως κλίνην, τουτέστι τὴν ἑαυτοῦ καρδίαν, φυλάσσοντα (199,3–4), ἵνα γένηται ὁ βασιλεὺς οὐκ ἐν καθέδρᾳ ἀλλ' ἐν ἀνακλίσει (III, 85,8–9)¹³⁸.

Bibliographie

- Alexakis, A. *Codex Parisinus graecus 115 and its Archetype* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 34), Washington 1996.
- Alexander, P. *Gregorii Nysseni In inscriptiones Psalmorum, In sextum Psalmum, In Ecclesiasten homiliae* (GNO V), Leiden 1986.
- Anderson, J.C. «The illustrated sermons of James the Monk: their dates, order, and place in the history of Byzantine art», *Viator* 22 (1991) 69–120.
- Aubert, H. – A. Dufour – B. Nicollier – R. Bodenmann, *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*. xvii, 1576 (Société du Musée historique de la Réformation), Genève 1994.
- Auwers, J.-M. *L'interprétation du Cantique des cantiques à travers les chaînes exégétiques grecques* (Instrumenta patristica et mediaevalia 56), Turnhout 2011;
- Auwers, J.-M. *Procopii Gazaei Epitome in Canticum Canticorum* (CCSG 67), Turnhout 2011.
- Baehrens, W.A. *Origenes Werke*, VIII (GCS), Leipzig 1925.
- Barbàra, M.A. *Origene, Commentario al Cantico dei cantici* (Biblioteca patristica 42), Bologna 2005.
- Baumstark, A. *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur mit Ausschluß der christlich-palästinensischen Texte*, Bonn 1922.
- Bélanger, R. *Grégoire le Grand, Commentaire sur le Cantique des cantiques* (SC 314), Paris 1984.
- Bianconi, D. *Tessalonica nell'età dei Paleologi. Le pratiche intellettuali nel riflesso della cultura scritta* (Dossiers byzantins 5), Paris 2005.
- Bossina, L. *Teodoro restituito: Ricerche sulla catena dei Tre Padri e la sua tradizione*, Alessandria 2008.
- Bossina, L. – A. De Blasi, «Un inedito Commento al Cantico dei Cantici nell'officina di Andrea Darmario. Edizione e storia del testo», *Byzantion* 87 (2017), 69–131.
- Brown-Witcher, H. «Gregorius Nyssenus», dans: F.E. Cranz – P.O. Kristeller (éd.), *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum: Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations*, v, Washington 1984.

138 Jacques omet l'incise φησίν, qui signale dans le texte nysséen qu'il s'agit d'une citation de Ct 1.12.

- Canart, P. « Le livre grec en Italie méridionale sous les règnes normand et souabe : aspects matériels et sociaux », *Scrittura e civiltà* 2 (1978) 103–162.
- Canévet, M. « Exégèse et théologie dans les traités spirituels de Grégoire de Nysse », dans : M. Harl (éd.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du colloque de Chevetogne (22–26 septembre 1969)*, Leiden 1971, 144–168.
- Canévet, M. *Grégoire de Nysse et l'herméneutique biblique. Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu* (Études augustinienne, série Antiquité 99), Paris 1983.
- Cassin, M. « Tradition manuscrite grecque de l'Histoire ecclésiastique », dans : S. Morlet et L. Perrone (éd.), *Eusèbe de Césarée, Histoire ecclésiastique. Commentaire. 1, Études d'introduction* (Anagôgê), Paris 2012, 209–242;
- Cassin, M. *L'écriture de la controverse chez Grégoire de Nysse : polémique littéraire et exégèse dans le Contre Eunome* (Études augustinienne, série Antiquité 193), Paris 2012;
- Cassin, M. « Confusion eunomienne et clarté nysséenne : *Contre Eunome* III 2 », dans : J. Leemans et M. Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa, Contra Eunomium 111: an English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Leuven, 14–17 September 2010)* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 124), Leiden, Boston 2014, 264–292.
- Cazes, H. (éd.). *Bonaventura Vulcanius: Works and Networks, Brugge 1588-Leiden 1614* (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 194), Leiden-Boston 2010.
- Ceresa-Gastaldo, A. « L'esegesi biblica nel *Commento al Cantico dei cantici* di Filone di Carpasia », dans : *Forma futuri. Studi in onore del cardinale Michele Pellegrino*, Torino 1975;
- Ceresa-Gastaldo, A. *Filone di Carpasia, Commento al Cantico dei cantici nell'antica versione latina di Epifanio Scolastico* (Corona Patrum 6), Torino 1979.
- Ceulemans, R. « A *Catena Hauniensis* Discovered in the Book of Canticles », *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 85 (2009) 63–70;
- Ceulemans, R. « New manuscripts of the catena Trium Patrum ('B2') and of the commentaries by Theodoret of Cyrhus and the Three Fathers ('B1') on the Song of Songs », *JÖB* 61 (2011) 105–120;
- Ceulemans, R. « The Catena Marciana on the Song of Songs », dans : P. Van Deun – C. Macé (éd.), *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium? Proceedings of the International Conference held in Leuven, 6–8 May 2009* (OLA 212), Leuven, Paris 2011, 177–209.
- Conley, Th.M. « Vulcanius as editor: The Greek Texts », dans : Cazes (éd.), *Bonaventura Vulcanius: works and networks, Brugge 1588-Leiden 1614* (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 194), Leiden-Boston 2010, 337–350.
- Cortesi, A. *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nissa: Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale* (Studia ephemeridis augustinianum 70), Roma 2000.

- D'Aiuto, F. « Note ai manoscritti del Menologio imperiale », *RSBN* 39 (2002) 189–224.
- Déchanet, J.-M. *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, Exposé sur le Cantique des cantiques* (sc 82), Paris 1962.
- Déchanet, J.-M. *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry. Aux sources d'une pensée*, Paris 1978.
- De Gregorio, G. *Il copista greco Manouel Malaxos: studio biografico e paleografico-codicologico* (Littera antiqua 8), Città del Vaticano 1991;
- De Gregorio, G. « Studi su copisti greci del tardo Cinquecento. I, Ancora Manuel Malaxos », *Römische Historische Mitteilungen* 37 (1995) 97–144;
- De Gregorio, G. « Costantinopoli-Tubinga-Roma, ovvero la “duplice conversione” di un manoscritto bizantino (Vat. gr. 738) », *BZ* 93 (2000) 37–107.
- Devreesse, R. *Codices vaticani graeci*. II, *Codices* 330–603, Città del Vaticano 1937;
- Devreesse, R. *Bibliothèque nationale, Département des manuscrits. Catalogue des manuscrits grecs*. II, *Le Fonds Coislin*, Paris 1945;
- Devreesse, R. *Codices vaticani graeci*. III, *Codices* 604–866, Città del Vaticano 1950;
- Devreesse, R. *Le fonds grec de la Bibliothèque vaticane des origines à Paul V* (Studi e testi 244), Città del Vaticano 1965.
- Dolidze, T. « Einige Aspekte der allegorischen Sprache in den Auslegungen von Origenes und Gregor von Nyssa zum Hohenlied », dans: L. Perrone (éd.), *Origeniana octava* (BETHL 164), 2003, 1061–1070.
- Dolidze, T. – E. Kochlamazashvili, « Old Georgian Translations of Gregory of Nyssa's Works », dans: V.H. Drecoll – M. Berghaus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism. Proceedings of the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa, Tübingen, 17–20 September 2008* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 106), Leiden, Boston 2011, 577–592.
- Dünzl, F. « Gregor von Nyssa's Homilien zum Canticum auf dem Hintergrund seiner *Vita Moysis* », *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990) 371–381;
- Dünzl, F. « Die Canticum-Exegese des Gregor von Nyssa und des Origenes im Vergleich », *JAC* 36 (1993) 94–109.
- van Esbroeck, M. « Description du répertoire de l'homélaire de Muš (Maténadaran 7729) », *Revue des études arméniennes* 18 (1984) 237–280.
- Faulhaber, M. *Hohelied- Proverbien- und Prediger-catenen* (Theologische Studien der Leo-Gesellschaft 4), Wien 1902.
- Fonkič, B. « Τα παλαιότερα χειρόγραφα με έργα του Συμεών Θεσσαλονίκης. Παλαιογραφικές παρατηρήσεις », dans: *Β' Διεθνές Συμπόσιο Βυζαντινή Μακεδονία. Δίκαιο, θεολογία, φιλολογία*, 26–28 νοεμβρίου 1999 Θεσσαλονίκη (Μακεδονική Βιβλιοθήκη 95), Θεσσαλονίκη 2003, 33–41.
- Gamillscheg, E. – D. Harlfinger – H. Hunger et alii, *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten 800–1600*, I–III, Wien 1981–1997.
- Gamillscheg, E. « Bemerkungen zu Handschriftensubskriptionen », *JÖB* 33 (1983) 255–265.

- Garitte, G. *Traité d'Hippolyte sur David et Goliath, sur le Cantique des cantiques et sur l'Antéchrist* (CSCO 263–264, script. iber. 15–16), Louvain 1965.
- Geerard, M. *et alii*, *Clavis Patrum graecorum* (Corpus christianorum), Turnhout 1974–1998.
- Géhin, P. *Les manuscrits syriaques de parchemin du Sinai et leurs membra disjecta* (CSCO 665, subs. 136), Leuven 2017.
- Gentile, S. « Traversari e Niccoli, Pico e Ficino: Note in margine ad alcuni manoscritti dei Padri », dans: M. Cortesi – C. Leonardi (eds.), *Tradizione patristiche nell'Umanesimo. Atti del convegno, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Firenze, 6–8 febbraio 1997* (Millennio Medievale 17, Atti di Convegni 4), Firenze 2000, 81–118.
- Gentile, S. *Umanesimo e Padri della Chiesa: manoscritti e incunaboli di testi patristici da Francesco Petrarca al primo Cinquecento: Bibliotheca Medicea Laurenziana*, Roma 1997.
- Graf, G. *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*. 1, *Die Übersetzungen* (Studi e testi 118), Città del Vaticano 1944.
- Guérard, M.-G. *Nil d'Ancyre, Commentaire sur le Cantique des cantiques* (SC 403), Paris 1994.
- Guinot, J.-N. *L'exégèse de Théodoret de Cyr* (Théologie historique 100), Paris 1995.
- Haikka, T. « Gregory of Nyssa's *Canticum* behind the *Akathistos* Hymn? », *Studia patristica* 47 (2010) 63–70.
- Harl, M. « Références philosophiques et références bibliques du langage de Grégoire de Nysse dans les *Orationes in Canticum canticorum* », dans: H. Heisenberg (éd.), *ΕΡΜΗΝΕΥΜΑΤΑ. Festschrift für Hadwiga Hörner zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, Heidelberg 1990, 117–131 (repris dans: *La Langue de Japhet. Quinze études sur la Septante et le grec des chrétiens*, Paris 1992, 225–249).
- Jackson, D.F. « Augsburg Greek Manuscript Acquisitions 1545–1600 », *Codices Manuscripti* 29 (2000) 1–10.
- Jeauneau, E. *Études érigéniennes* (Études augustinienes, Moyen-Âge et Temps modernes 18), Paris 1987.
- Jeffreys, E. « The Song of Songs and Twelfth Century Byzantium », *Prudentia* 23 (1991) 36–54.
- Jeffreys, E. « Iakovos Monachos and Spiritual Encyclopedias », dans: P. Van Deun – C. Macé (éd.), *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium? Proceedings of the International Conference held in Leuven, 6–8 May 2009* (OLA 212), Leuven, Paris 2011, 231–243.
- Jeffreys, E. « Tapestries of Quotation: The Challenges of Editing Byzantine Texts », dans: A. Bucossi, E. Kihlman (éd.), *Ars edendi, Lecture series*, 11 (Studia latina Stockholmiensia 58), Stockholm 2012, 35–61.
- Jeffreys, E. et M. *Iacobi monachi Epistulae* (CCSG 68), Turnhout 2009.
- Kämmel, H. « Hoeschel, David », *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 13 (1881) 176–177.

- Kiknadze, G. *St. Gregory of Nyssa, The Commentary on the Song of the Songs*, N. Melikishvili (éd.), Tbilisi 2013 (en géorgien).
- Kouroupou, M. – P. Géhin (éds.), *Catalogue des manuscrits conservés dans la Bibliothèque du Patriarcat œcuménique. Les manuscrits du monastère de la Panaghia de Chalki*, Turnhout 2008.
- Kremos, G.P. *Κατάλογος τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς Ἐθνικῆς καὶ τῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Βιβλιοθήκης*. I, *Θεολογία*, Ἀθήναι 1876.
- Laga, C. « Entering the Library of Jacobus Monachus. The Exemplar of Jacobus' Quotations from the Commentary on the Song of Songs by Gregory of Nyssa », dans: K. Demoen – J. Vereecken (éds.), *La spiritualité de l'univers byzantin dans le verbe et l'image. Hommages offerts à Edmond Voordeckers à l'occasion de son éméritat* (Instrumenta patristica 30), Turnhout 1997, 151–161.
- Laird, M. *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford-New York 2004.
- Lamberz, E. (éd.). *Concilium uniuersale Nicaenum secundum* (ACO II.3.1), Berlin – New York 2008.
- Langerbeck, H. *Gregorii Nysseni Homiliae in Canticum canticorum* (GNO VI), Leiden 1960.
- Ledegang-Keegstra, E. « Vulcanius et le réformateur Théodore de Bèze », dans: H. Cazes (éd.), *Bonaventura Vulcanius: Works and Networks, Brugge 1588-Leiden 1614* (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 194), Leiden-Boston 2010, 147–165.
- Lenk, L. « Höschel, David », *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 9 (1972), 368–369.
- Linardou, K. « The Couch of Solomon, a Monk, a Byzantine Lady, and the Song of Songs », dans: R.N. Swanson (ed.), *The Church and Mary. Papers read at the 2001 Summer Meeting and the 2002 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Studies in Church History 39), Woodbridge, Rochester (NY) 2004, 73–85;
- Linardou, K. « The Kokkinobaphos manuscripts revisited: the internal evidence of the books », *Scriptorium* 61 (2007) 384–407.
- Lucà, S. « Lesegesi di Nilo di Ancira sul libro dell'Ecclesiaste », *Sileno* 3 (1977) 13–39;
- Lucà, S. « Manoscritti greci dimenticati della Biblioteca Vallicelliana », *Augustinianum* 28 (1988) 661–702;
- Lucà, S. « Su origine e datazione del Crypt. B.β.vi (ff. 1–9). Appunti sulla collezione manoscritta greca di Grottaferrata », dans: L. Perria (éd.), *Tra Oriente e Occidente. Scritture e libri greci fra le regione orientali di Bisanzio e l'Italia* (Testi e studi bizantino-neoellenici 14), Roma 2003, 145–224;
- Lucà, S. « *Ars renouandi*: modalità di riscrittura nell'Italia greca medievale », dans: S. Lucà (éd.), *Libri palinsesti greci: Conservazione, Restauro Digitale, Studio. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Villa Mondragone – Monte Porzio Catone – Università di Roma Tor Vergata – Biblioteca del Monumento Nazionale di Grottaferrata, 21–24 aprile 2004*, Roma 2008, 131–154.

- Lucchesi, E. «Regards nouveaux sur la littérature copte», dans P. Buzzi – A. Camplani (éd.), *Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production and Intellectual Trends. Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi* (Studia ephemeridis Augustinianum 125), Roma 2011, 369–414.
- Lucioli Campi, M. *La versione siriana dei discorsi sul Cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nissa*, Roma 1979.
- Mai, A. *Classici auctores*, IX, Roma 1937.
- Maillard, J.-F. et alii, *La France des humanistes*, 1 (Europa humanistica), Turnhout 1999.
- Meis, A. «Das Paradox des Menschen im *Canticum-Kommentar* Gregors von Nyssa und bei Origenes», dans: W.A. Bienert – U. Kühneweg (éds.), *Origeniana septima* (BETHL 137), Leuven 1999, 469–496.
- Meloni, P. *Il profumo dell'immortalità. L'interpretazione patristica di Cantico 1, 3* (Verba seniorum, n.s. 7), Roma 1975.
- Meredith, A. «Licht und Finsternis bei Origenes und Gregor von Nyssa», dans: Th. Kobusch – B. Mojsisch (éds.), *Platon und den abendländischen Geistesgeschichte*, Darmstadt 1997, 48–59.
- Metzler, D. «Löwenklau, Johannes», *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 15 (1987) 95–96.
- Molhuysen, P.C. *Bibliotheca Universitatis Leidensis. Codices manuscripti*. 1, *Codices Vulcaniani*, Leiden 1910.
- Moore, P. *Iter Psellianum. A Detailed Listing of Manuscript Sources for all Works Attributed to Michael Psellos, Including a Comprehensive Bibliography* (Subsidia Medievalia 26), Toronto 2005, POE 2, 469–473.
- Morlet, S. «Gn 2, 17: l'exégèse patristique», dans: G. Dahan (éd.), *Gn 2, 17, l'arbre de la connaissance* (Études d'histoire de l'exégèse 9), Paris 2016, 37–68.
- Muradjan, K.M. «La traduction arménienne du Commentaire du Cantique des Cantiques de Grégoire de Nysse par Vardan Areveltsi», *Istoriko-Filologičeskij Žurnal* 130 (1990) 118–126.
- Nadal Cañellas, J. *Gregorii Acindyni Refutationes duae operis Gregorii Palamae cui titulus Dialogus inter orthodoxum et barlaamitam* (CCSG 31), Turnhout, Leuven 1995.
- Neuschäfer, B. *Origenes als Philologe* (Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 18), Basel 1987.
- Nikolopoulos, P.G. «Εἶναι ἔργον τοῦ Γρηγορίου Νύσσης ἡ συνέχεια τῆς ἐρμηνείας εἰς τὸ ἄσµα τῶν ἁσµάτων», *ΕΕΒΣ* 53 (2007–2009) 467–502;
- Nikolopoulos, P.G. «Τὰ ἐν τῇ Ἑθνικῇ βιβλιοθήκῃ τῆς Ἑλλάδος χειρόγραφα Γρηγορίου Νύσσης», *Θεολογία* 79 (2008) 530–595.
- Ohly, F. *Hohelied-Studien, Grundzüge einer Geschichte der Hoheliedauslegung des Abendlandes bis zum 1200* (Schriften der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft an der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main. Geisteswissenschaftliche Reihe 1), Wiesbaden 1958.
- Parmentier, M.F.G. «Syriac Translations of Gregory of Nyssa», *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 20 (1989) 143–193.

- Petitmengin, P. – L. Ciccolini, «Jean Matal et la bibliothèque Saint-Marc de Florence (1545)», *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 46 (2005) 207–374.
- Placida, R. «La presenza di Origene nelle *Omellerie sul Cantico dei Cantici* di Gregorio di Nissa», *Vetera christianorum* 34 (1997) 33–49.
- Pontone, M. *Ambrogio Traversari monaco e umanista: fra scrittura latina e scrittura greca* (Miscellanea – Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento 4), Savigliano 2010.
- Prato, G. «I manoscritti greci dei secoli XIII e XIV: note paleografiche», dans: D. Harlfinger – G. Prato (éds.), *Paleografia e codicologia greca. Atti del II. Colloquio internazionale (Berlino-Wolfenbüttel 17–21 ottobre 1983)*, Alessandria 1991, 131–149 (repris dans *Studi di paleografia greca* [Collectanea 4], Spoleto 1994, 115–131).
- Pseutogkas, B. St. *Ἀγίου Νεοφύτου τοῦ Ἐγκλείστου Συγγραμματα*, Δ', Paphos 2001.
- Quantin, J.-L. «Les jésuites et l'érudition anglicane», *XVII^e siècle* 237 (2007) 691–711;
- Quantin, J.-L. «Du Chrysostome latin au Chrysostome grec. Une histoire européenne (1588–1613)», dans: M. Wallraff – R. Brändle (éd.), *Chrysostomosbilder in 1600 Jahren. Facetten der Wirkungsgeschichte eines Kirchenvaters* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 105), Berlin – New York 2008, 267–346.
- Rosenbaum, H. *Nilus von Ankyra, Schriften*. 1, *Kommentar zum Hohelied* (PTS 57), Berlin – New York 2004.
- Sakkélion, J. et A. *Κατάλογος τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς Ἐθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, Ἀθῆναι 1892.
- Schmid, W. *Verzeichnis der griechischen Handschriften der Königlichen Universitätsbibliothek zu Tübingen* (Systematisch-alphabetischer Hauptkatalog der Königlichen Universitätsbibliothek zu Tübingen), Tübingen 1902.
- Sels, L. «The Slav Reception of Gregory of Nyssa's Works: An Overview of Early Slavonic Translations», dans: V.H. Drecoll – M. Berghaus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism. Proceedings of the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa, Tübingen, 17–20 September 2008* (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 106), Leiden, Boston 2011, 593–608.
- Sferlea, O. *Ἀόριστος. Le thème de l'infini chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Thèse de doctorat, École pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences religieuses, Paris 2010;
- Sferlea, O. «Syméon le Nouveau Théologien comme témoin de la tradition spirituelle de Grégoire de Nysse», *Studia monastica* 54 (2012) 235–251;
- Sferlea, O. «On the Interpretation of the Theory of Perpetual Progress (*epektasis*). Taking into Account the Testimony of Eastern Monastic Tradition», *RHE* 109 (2014) 564–587.
- Stinger, Ch.L. *Humanism and the Church Fathers: Ambrogio Traversari (1386–1439) and the Revival of Patristic Theology in the Early Italian Renaissance*, Albany 1977.
- Stone, M.E. – D. Kouymjian – H. Lehmann, *Album of Armenian Paleography*, Aarhus 2002.

- Taylor, D.G.K. « Les Pères cappadociens dans la tradition syriaque », dans : A. Schmidt – D. Gonnet (éds.), *Les Pères grecs dans la tradition syriaque* (Études syriaques 4), Paris 2007, 43–61.
- Thomson, R.W. « Gregory of Narek's *Commentary on the Song of Songs* », *JThS* 34 (1983) 453–496.
- Traversari, A. *Latinae epistolae...*, Firenze 1759 (reprint Bologna 1968).
- Tufano, C. « La versione siriana dei discorsi sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa contenuta nel cod. Vat. sir. 106. Discorso XIII (gr. XI) », *Studi e ricerche sull'Oriente cristiano* 11 (1988), 63–80, 143–162.
- Tufano, C. *La versione siriana dei discorsi sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa. Discorso XIII (gr. XI)*, Roma 1988.
- Turyn, A. *Dated Greek Manuscripts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries in the Libraries of Italy*, Urbana – Chicago – London 1972.
- Ullman, B.L. – Ph.A. Stadter, *The Public Library of Renaissance Florence. Niccolò Niccoli, Cosimo de' Medici and the Library of San Marco* (Medioevo e Umanesimo 10), Padova 1972.
- Van den Eynde, C. *La version syriaque du commentaire de Grégoire de Nysse sur le Cantique des cantiques* (Bibliothèque du Muséon 10), Louvain 1939.
- Van Spitael, M.-A. (éd.). *Descriptio insule Crete et liber insularum, cap. XI: Creta*, Herakleio 1981.
- Vinel, F. « La version arménienne des *Homélies sur l'Ecclésiaste* de Grégoire de Nysse », *Revue des études arméniennes* 21 (1989) 127–143.
- Vries de Heekelingen, H. de *Correspondance de Bonaentura Vulcanius pendant son séjour à Cologne, Genève et Bâle (1573–1577), précédée de quelques lettres écrites avant cette époque*, La Haye 1923.
- Welsersheimb, L. « Das Kirchenbild der griechischen Väterkommentare zum Hohen Lied », *ZKTh* 70 (1948) 393–449.
- Werminghoff, A. (éd.). *Concilia aevi Karolini*, (MGH, Concilia 11.2), Hanover-Leipzig 1908.
- Westerink, L.G. *Michael Psellus, Poemata*, Stuttgart – Leipzig 1992, 13–67.

Gregor von Nyssa in der Vorgeschichte des byzantinischen Bilderstreites

Reinhart Staats

Vorbemerkung: Diesem Aufsatz liegt zugrunde mein Vortrag in Rom im September 2014 (XIII. International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa). Ich hatte damals auch aus einem Vortrag zitiert, den ich vorher (August 2014) auf dem Makarios-Symposium in Bergvik (Finnland) gehalten hatte: „Das herrliche Bild Christi in der Seele des Menschen. Makarios-Symeon in der Vorgeschichte des byzantinischen Bilderstreites“.¹ Daher kann ich hier nun die Bedeutung unseres Kirchenvaters Gregor von Nyssa in derselben Geschichte des Bilderstreites besonders hervorheben. Daher publiziere ich schließlich hier auch eine Liste von Begriffen und Sätzen in den Texten des Makarios-Symeon, für die es eindeutig Parallelen in Gregors Hohelied-Kommentar gibt.

Vor einem halben Jahrhundert (1967) war mein Buch erschienen „Gregor von Nyssa und die Messalianer“. Mein Thema war die Untersuchung der literarischen Beziehung des Traktates von Gregor von Nyssa „De instituto christiano“ zur „Epistola magna“ des Makarios-Symeon, eines in der Ostkirche bis heute berühmten und sehr beliebten Mönchsvaters und Seelsorgers.² Die Beziehung zwischen Gregor von Nyssa und Makarios-Symeon ist in diesen beiden Texten trotz wichtiger inhaltlicher Differenzen philologisch sehr eng. Werner Jaeger, klassischer Philologe und bekannt als Begründer eines Neuhumanismus, der unter den Nazis von Berlin in die USA fliehen musste und schließlich in Harvard die große Gesamtedition der Werke Gregors organisierte, war selbst Herausgeber einer ersten kritischen Ausgabe von Gregors „De instituto christiano“.³ Werner Jaeger wollte mit der Gesamtedition und besonders mit diesem Gregor-Traktat einen „dritten“ Humanismus im Sinne des Erasmus von Rotterdam empfehlen. Jaeger meinte, dieser Traktat sei das letzte Werk Gregors, es lebe von den früheren Schriften, baue auf sie auf und bringe deren Inhalt auf einen letzten reifen Ausdruck. Damit habe Gregor einen jungen Mönch zur Vollkommenheit erziehen wollen, indem er ihm einen Führer–„guide-book“ oder

1 Dieser Vortrag war schon 2016 erschienen in Band 49 der „Göttinger Orientforschungen“ (ed. Martin Tamcke, Wiesbaden 2016, 17–31).

2 R. Staats, *Gregor von Nyssa und die Messalianer. Die Frage der Priorität zweier altkirchlicher Schriften* (PTS 8), Berlin 1968.

3 W. Jaeger (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, VIII, Pars I, Leiden 1952, 40–89.

„Vademecum“, wie Jaeger den Traktat nannte – an die Hand gab. Die entscheidende Aufgabe christlich-humanistischer Erziehung („Paideia“) sei die göttliche Gnade und das die Gnade unterstützende menschliche Vermögen. Gregor sei es gelungen, die christliche Gnadenlehre mit hellenistischer ethischer Tradition, mit dem klassischen Ideal der „Tugend“, zu versöhnen, indem er die besondere Bedeutung der Hilfe des Heiligen Geistes erkannte. Denn der Geist ist es, der die Erziehung des Asketen lenkt: „An diesem Punkte erscheint das adiutorium, die ‚Synergie‘ des Heiligen Geistes, als der entscheidende Unterschied der Situation des christlichen Asketen und des antiken griechischen Philosophen, der keinen derartigen Beistand hat.“⁴

Werner Jaeger war überzeugt davon, dass die von ihm edierte Schrift Gregors „De instituto christiano“ gegenüber der „Epistola magna“ des Makarios-Symeon die Priorität habe. Dagegen hatte ich 1967 nachweisen können, dass umgekehrt die Epistola Magna des Makarios-Symeon die literarische Vorlage in Gregors „De instituto“ gewesen war. Diese Erkenntnis musste Folgen haben nicht nur für die Makarios-Symeon-Forschung sondern auch für die Gregor-Forschung. Die Priorität des Makarios-Symeon gegenüber Gregor von Nyssa konnte seitdem nicht widerlegt werden und fand auch Anerkennung. Auch die Behauptung, dass womöglich Gregor von Nyssa gar nicht der Autor der Schrift „De instituto christiano“ gewesen sei (Jean Daniélou), konnte sich nicht durchsetzen.⁵ Bis 1967 war allerdings in der patristischen Wissenschaft die Lehre Werner Jaegers von der Priorität Gregors weithin anerkannt gewesen. So sollte der alte hochgelehrte Gregor von Nyssa den syrisch-griechischen Mönchsvater Makarios-Symeon zur Niederschrift seines viel schlichteren Großen Briefes inspiriert haben. Doch nach 1967 war ja dieses Prioritätsproblem umgekehrt zu beurteilen. In meiner 1984 erschienenen textkritischen Edition der Epistola Magna habe ich das dann auch durch synoptische Gegenüberstellung der beiden umstrittenen Texte sichtbar und nachprüfbar gemacht.⁶ Freilich waren schon früher in anderen Texten des Makarios-Symeon wörtliche und inhaltliche Parallelen zum Werk Gregors festzustellen, so dass man auch in diesen Texten eine geistige Abhängigkeit unseres syrischen Kirchenvaters von dem in der christlichen Theologie- und Dogmengeschichte ja auch hoch angese-

4 Id., *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, Cambridge (Ma) 1961; Id., *Gregor vpm Nyssa's Lehre vom Heiligen Geist. Aus dem Nachlass herausgegeben von Hermann Dörries*, Leiden 1966.

5 J. Daniélou, „Orientations actuelles de la recherche sur Grégoire de Nysse“, in: M. Harl (éd.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du colloque de Chevotogne (22–26 septembre 1969)*, Leiden 1971, 16.

6 R. Staats (ed.), *Makarios-Symeon, Epistola Magna. Eine messalianische Mönchsregel und ihre Umschrift in Gregors von Nyssa De instituto christiano*, Göttingen 1984.

heneren kappadozischen Kirchenvaters vermuten wollte. So hatte schon Hermann Dörries in seinem Kommentar zu den „Fünzig geistlichen Homilien“ des Makarios gar nicht wenige Parallelen in Gregors Homilien zum alttestamentlichen Hohenlied Salomos gefunden.⁷ Ich habe in letzter Zeit noch weitere Parallelen in Gregors „In Canticum“ gefunden. Sie werden zum Schluss dieser Untersuchung vorgestellt werden.

Doch in diesem Beitrag geht es mir hauptsächlich darum, die kirchengeschichtliche Nähe zwischen Makarios-Symeon und Gregor von Nyssa an einem einzigen, wichtigen Thema der christlichen Kunstgeschichte und Dogmengeschichte zu erklären. Denn Makarios-Symeon und Gregor von Nyssa sind nach meiner Untersuchung wichtige Zeugen, um die in der abendländischen Welt ja immer noch so unerklärliche Ablehnung von Christusbildern im christlichen Orient neu zu verstehen. Man hat immer wieder eine Bilderfeindlichkeit in dem vom großen Konstantin im vierten Jahrhundert gegründeten christlich-römischen Kaiserreich mit dem Einfluss des Bilderverbots im Alten Testament und daher im Judentum und schließlich seit dem siebten Jahrhundert auch mit dem Einfluss der Weltreligion des Islam zu erklären versucht. Dagegen spricht allerdings, dass es in Kappadozien und im großen Syrien zur Zeit unserer beiden Kirchenväter noch gar keine Ikonostasen in kirchlichen Gebäuden und überhaupt keine theologische Rechtfertigung von Jesusbildern und Heiligenbildern in Kirchen oder in der Öffentlichkeit gegeben hat. Für die Kirchengeschichte bis ins vierte Jahrhundert bleibt das Urteil einer Kapazität christlicher Archäologie gültig: „Polemik gegen das Götterbild schließt in der christlichen Frühzeit nicht nur jedes Kultbild, sondern auch jede porträtmäßige Darstellung Christi oder seiner Apostel aus ... Soweit man Christus darstellt, geschieht es in Form von ‚symbola‘: Christus als Hirt, als Lehrer, als Fischer ... Einzeldarstellungen von Christus verbieten sich von selbst. An ihre Stelle tritt die Gestalt des Guten Hirten“ (Johannes Kollwitz)⁸. Umso mächtiger als das gemalte oder gemeißelte Christusbild war die private Erfahrung eines inneren Bildes von Jesus Christus im Herzen und in der Seele des Gläubigen. Das bezeugen auch Gregors Homilien „In Canticum“ wie aber ganz besonders die „Fünzig geistlichen Homilien des Makarios“. Beide, Gregor von Nyssa und Makarios-Symeon (wie Makarios in wissenschaftlicher Literatur auch heißt) waren in Kleinasien und in Syrien in den Jahrhunderten des byzantinischen Bilderstreits hoch angesehene Kirchenväter!

7 H. Dörries – E. Klostermann – M. Kroeger, *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarios* (PTS 4), Berlin 1964, 5, 17–18, 24, 33, 48, 67, 84–85, 91, 93, 117, 124, 139, 162.

8 J. Kollwitz, „Bild 111“, *RAC* 2 (1954) 320.

Erst im Jahr 726 war es in Byzanz zum offenen Streit über gemalte Bilder in Kirchen und besonders über die Abbildung Christi gekommen. Prominenter Gegner der Bilder in Kirchen war der aus Syrien stammende Kaiser Leo III., mit dem auch die lange Reihe einer syrischen Kaiserdynastie begründet wurde. Allerorten kam es zu Unruhen, die über hundert Jahre dauerten, obwohl schon 787 das siebte ökumenische Konzil in Nizäa (= Nizäa II) im Sinne des Johannes von Damaskus in einem Kompromiss festgestellt hatte, dass Christen die heiligen Bilder in ihren Kirchen nicht anbeten, wohl aber verehren dürfen: *non adoratio sed veneratio*. Der byzantinische Bilderstreit im achten und neunten Jahrhundert hatte für die Ostkirche eine ähnliche, Identität stiftende Bedeutung wie später im Westen der Investiturstreit zwischen Kaiser und Papst im elften und zwölften Jahrhundert. Aber im Osten hatte es niemals eine spezielle Kreuzzugstheologie oder gar militärische Kreuzzüge wie im Mittelalter im Westen gegeben. Auch der polemische Begriff „Ikonoklasmus“, der eine allgemeine gewalttätige „Zerstörung von Bildern“ in den Kirchen unterstellt, so wie wir das im Zeitalter der Reformation aus Deutschland, den Niederlanden und der Schweiz kennen, wird dem historischen Phänomen des Ikonoklasmus im Osten nicht gerecht. Exzesse und Verwüstungen vieler Kirchen hatte es in Byzanz nicht gegeben. Darauf hat Hans-Georg Thümmel besonders hingewiesen.⁹ Als endlich der „Triumph“ der Orthodoxie über die Gegner der Bilder gefeiert wurde, so dass feierlich die Christus- und Heiligenbilder in Konstantinopels „Hagia Sophia“ wieder angebracht und der Gemeinde präsentiert wurden, da konnte Patriarch Photios endlich auch den Sieg der Orthodoxie feiern: „Not by blood and massacre, but by the written theological argument the disciple of Christ were fighting against evil itself“. So hatte Cyrill Mango 1958 dieses neue orthodoxe Selbstbewusstsein schließlich auch mit den Worten kommentiert: „The victory over all the heresies was not a military one and was not accompanied by loss of life. It was achieved by the pen, not the sword“.¹⁰

Ausführliche und theologische Argumente der Gegner der Bilder sind nicht erhalten. Wir kennen anscheinend nur indirekte Zeugnisse in orthodoxer Polemik, keine Selbstzeugnisse der sogenannten Ikonoklasten. Das ist meines Wissens der Forschungsstand auch noch heute. Waren es überwiegend christliche,

9 H.G. Thümmel, „Der byzantinische Bilderstreit. Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung“, in: J. Irmscher (Hg.), *Der byzantinische Bilderstreit*, Leipzig 1980, 9–34 (25). Siehe jetzt auch: H.G. Thümmel, *Die Konzilien zur Bilderfrage im 8. Und 9. Jahrhundert*, Paderborn 2005.

10 Photios, *Homilie 18*. Siehe dazu: C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photios. Patriarch of Constantinople, English Translation, Introduction and Commentaries*, Cambridge (Ma) 1958, 311–314; R. Staats, „Photios and the Synodikon of Orthodoxy in opposition to mystical and prophetic heresies“, *The Patristic and Byzantine Review* 2 (1983) 162–173.

ungebildete Laien, die den Bildern in den Kirchen die nötige Verehrung verweigerten? Aber konnten nicht auch alle, die kein Verlangen nach Bildern in den Kirchen hatten, sich auf die Bibel und zumal auf das zweite Gebot des Dekalogs berufen und nach der konstantinischen Wende sogar auf berühmte und sehr verschiedene Kirchenväter wie Euseb von Cäsarea oder Epiphanius von Salamis? Jedenfalls gilt heute als sicher, dass zwar „judenchristliche“, aber keine jüdischen Einflüsse und schon gar nicht die islamischen Eroberungen seit dem siebten Jahrhundert die bildkritischen und polemischen Stimmungen im christlichen Orient hervorgerufen hatten. Diese religiöse Abneigung besonders gegenüber äußeren Bilddarstellungen von Jesus Christus entsprach uralter christlicher Tradition, sie kam von innen, sie war spirituell motiviert, sie kam aus der Mitte der Kirche selbst.

Es lohnt sich, die Schriften des Makarios-Symeon, eines sehr berühmten Mönchstheologen in der Ostkirche, wegen ihrer aus westlicher Sicht eigentümlichen Bild-Theologie zu untersuchen. Der echte Name des Autors ist umstritten. Das von ihm in wenigstens vier umfangreichen griechischen Textsammlungen der neueren Forschung sich erschlossene literarische Werk ist sowohl unter dem Namen „Makarios“ als auch „Symeon“ überliefert. Der Autornamen „Symeon“ findet sich überwiegend in zahlreichen Handschriften syrischer Sprache. Für die große arabische Makarios-Überlieferung gibt es noch keine umfassende Untersuchung. Mehrmals taucht in der syrischen Überlieferung auch der Name eines „Symeon von Mesopotamien“ auf, was zu der naheliegenden Vermutung führte, dass der Autor mit einem Messalianer „Symeon“ identisch sein könne (Hermann Dörries). Denn es finden sich im Werk dieses Mönchsvaters tatsächlich gar nicht wenige Sätze und theologische Meinungen, welche 431 auf dem dritten ökumenischen Konzil zu Ephesus als „messalianisch“ verurteilt worden waren. Und zu den Verurteilten gehörte auch ein namentlich genannter Mönch „Symeon“!¹¹

Der Messalianismus gilt in der Ostkirche vor allem als eine Häresie des „Enthusiasmus“ und der Geistesschwärmerei. Das war der Hauptvorwurf: Für einen Asketen sei es möglich, in inständigem Gebet die göttliche Erfahrung des Heiligen Geistes sogar „in aller Fülle und Wirkmächtigkeit“ zu erfahren und ein himmlisches Glücksgefühl zu erleben. Der dieser geistlichen Bewegung angehängte Name „Messalianer“ kommt aus dem Syrischen und heißt

11 Siehe die Einleitung im Buch von H. Dörries, *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon*, Göttingen 1978, 11–18; R. Staats, „Messalianer“, *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 22 (1993) 607–613. Der letzte ausführliche Beitrag zur Messalianer-Forschung ist das Buch von K. Fitschen, *Messalianismus und Antimessealianismus. Ein Beispiel ostkirchlicher Ketzergeschichte* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 71), Göttingen 1998.

„Beter“, griechisch „Euchiten“. Ein unsoziales und gegenüber der kirchlichen Hierarchie gleichgültiges Verhalten wurde ihnen auf mehreren Synoden, schon um 390 auf einer Synode in Side (Pamphylien), vorgeworfen. Seit dem fünften Jahrhundert, besonders seit dem dritten ökumenischen Konzil von Ephesus im Jahr 431, wurden fast die meisten Häresien der Ostkirche auch mit diesem alte Vorwurf des „Messalianismus“ kritisiert und auch verurteilt. So sollen die im fünften Jahrhundert verurteilten Lampetianer und die Markianisten, später die Bogomilen, Phundiaditen, Paulikianer und andere Sekten auch „Messalianer“ gewesen sein. Sehr bemerkenswert ist auch, dass sich noch im vierzehnten Jahrhundert die schließlich als orthodox geltende Lehre der sogenannten „hesychastischen“ Mönchsbewegung auf dem Athos in Griechenland zunächst gegen den Vorwurf des Messalianismus wehren musste. Aber auch nach 1470 wurden sonderbare, sehr fromme einfache Christen im russischen Nowgorod und in Moskau nicht nur als „Judaisierende“ sondern auch als „Messalianer“ oder „Euchiten“ („Beter“) verachtet.¹²

Geradezu stereotyp wurde mit der Anklage des „Messalianismus“ der Vorwurf der Bilderfeindlichkeit verbunden. Das geschah exemplarisch im „Synodikon“, einem seit ca. 843 fortgeschriebenen Kompendium der Orthodoxie, welches in Konstantinopel vom Patriarchen Photios sehr gefördert wurde. Photios war damals vielleicht sogar der Initiator von solchem „Triumph über alle Häresien“. Als gelehrter Kirchenhistoriker hatte Photios in seinem großen Werk „Bibliothek“ zahlreiche, sonst unbekannte Quellen zitiert, auch zum Messalianismus und zum Bilderstreit. Photios zitiert auch einen Bischof Heraklidas von Nyssa, der um das Jahr 440 zwei Briefe gegen die Messalianer verfasste (Bibl. 52). Im zweiten Brief gegen die Messalianer hatte Heraklidas auch „das Alter der verehrungswürdigen Bilder“ erörtert. Das ist ein Primärzeugnis dafür, dass die Bilderfrage tatsächlich ein Thema in der Kontroverse mit den Messalianern schon sehr früh gewesen sein muss.¹³ Auch der Sitz des Bischofs Heraklidas im kappadozischen Nyssa ist sehr merkwürdig. Denn ein halbes Jahrhundert vor Heraklidas hatte ja kein Geringerer als der große Theologe Gregor von Nyssa und erste Bischof von Nyssa seinen Traktat für Mönche „De instituto christiano“ verfasst, womit er den Großen Brief des Makarios-Symeon nach seinem eigenen orthodox-kirchlichen Verständnis umgeschrieben und somit korrigiert

12 R. Staats, „Messalianerforschung und Ostkirchenkunde“, W. Strothmann (Hg.), *Makarios-Symposium über das Böse (Göttinger Orientforschungen 24)*, Wiesbaden 1983, 47–71 (49–50); K. Fitschen, *Messalianismus und Antimesalianismus*, 269–272, 323–349.

13 G.D. Prosser, „A defense of Icons during the Messalian Controversy“, *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993) 444–450; K. Fitschen, *Messalianismus und Antimesalianismus*, 50.

hatte. Dieser Bischof Heraklidas von Nyssa, vermutlich der zweite Nachfolger des Gregor von Nyssa, hatte gegenüber Messalianern das angeblich hohe Alter der Verehrung von christlichen Bildern, besonders von Christus-Bildern, verteidigt. Es war daher nach 400 n.Chr. im Bistum Nyssa mitten im kleinasiatischen Kappadozien die Verehrung von Bildern im Gottesdienst als gottesdienstlicher Handlung gerade nicht selbstverständlich sondern sehr umstritten. Meine These ist: Im Werk des Makarios-Symeon gibt es nicht die geringste Spur einer kultischen Verehrung von gemalten Christusbildern oder Heiligenbildern. Derselbe negative Befund gilt nicht nur für den von Makarios-Symeon abhängigen Traktat Gregors „De instituto christiano“ sondern für das Gesamtwerk Gregors.

Wie schon für Makarios-Symeon so war auch für Gregor von Nyssa der innere Gottesdienst in der Seele des Menschen so wichtig. Gregor konnte ja auch in einem, später im Zeitalter der Reformation sehr beachteten Brief die im vierten Jahrhundert schon populär gewordenen Wallfahrten nach Jerusalem als geistlose und unmoralische Veranstaltungen kritisieren, weil sie auch dem Neuen Testament widersprächen (ep. 2). Als Asket empfiehlt Gregor „vom eigenen Leib weg zum Herren zu pilgern und nicht von Kappadokien nach Palästina“, und er beschließt seine Mahnung mit Worten aus dem Johannes-evangelium: „Wenn der Geist weht, wohin er will“, dann werden auch die hier [vor Ort] glauben und aufgrund ihres Glaubens der Gnade teilhaftig werden und nicht aufgrund ihrer Reise nach Jerusalem (vgl. Jn 4.23–24 und Rm 12.6)¹⁴. Man könnte einwenden, dass die Tatsache des Fehlens einer direkten Kritik der Bilderverehrung im Gesamtwerk Gregors doch nur ein schwaches *argumentum e silentio* sei. Aber anachronistisch ist es nicht, weil ja schon in der zweiten Generation nach Gregor in der Bischofsstadt Nyssa ein Bilderstreit bekannt wurde, wie dieser Streit dem Titel des Briefes von Bischof Heraklidas „Über das Alter der verehrungswürdigen Bilder“ zu entnehmen ist. Aber ganz und gar nicht kann man sich einen Makarios-Symeon als einen Verteidiger von Bildern in Kirchen und deren Verehrung vorstellen.

So viel dürfte feststehen: Gregor von Nyssa bewahrte sich eine seelsorgerliche und hilfreiche Haltung gegenüber syrischen Asketengruppen, die ihn als eine christliche Laienbewegung fasziniert haben müssen. Der meist lateinisch zitierte Titel des von Werner Jaeger edierten Traktats „De instituto christiano“ hat ja eigentlich einen griechischen Wortlaut, der schon das Programm für eine wahre Askese im Text ankündigt: „Über das gottgewollte Ziel und die wahre Askese“. Der alte Bischof Gregor von Nyssa bewahrte sich auch eine große Unabhängigkeit gegenüber neidischen und ihm oberflächlich und ungeistlich

14 Epist II 18–19 (GNO VIII/2 18,17–19,12; tr. Pasquali 18–19).

erscheinenden bischöflichen Kollegen. Das geht nach meiner Untersuchung sehr klar hervor aus zwei Briefen, die Gregor um 390 schrieb (ep. 1 und ep. 17).¹⁵ Im ersten Brief beklagt sich Gregor darüber, dass ihn sein Nachbarbischof Helladios einmal übel behandelte, als er ihn im kappadozischen Caesarea besucht hatte. Helladios habe ihm das Recht auf Predigt verweigert und habe ihn zur Buße nötigen wollen und ihn also wie einen Exkommunizierten behandelt. Gregor protestierte dagegen: „Welche kirchlichen Kanones sind gegen uns verlesen worden? Welche gesetzeskräftige Verfügung eines Bischofs hat das Gerichtsurteil über uns bestätigt?“ Gregor erinnerte daran, dass er doch gemeinsam mit Helladios im Jahr 381 auf dem großen Konzil in Konstantinopel zu einem Garanten der Orthodoxie, also in dieser unruhigen Zeit zu einer Art Normbischof ernannt worden war, was tatsächlich im Codex Theodosianus beurkundet ist.¹⁶ Dieser erste Brief Gregors ist an den Patriarchen Flavian von Antiochien adressiert. Wie ein Steppenbrand, so schreibt Gregor eingangs, gehe eine Feuersbrunst theologischer Unruhe über Kappadozien hinweg, so dass auch die Diözese Flavians in Gefahr sei, davon erfasst zu werden. Hier ist daran zu erinnern, dass Flavian seit der Synode von Side über die Verurteilung der Messalianer gut informiert war und persönlich auch einen Messalianerführer „Adelphios“ in Antiochien verhört hatte.¹⁷

Aus derselben Zeit (vor 400) stammt nun auch der siebzehnte Brief Gregors an die Presbyter der früheren Kaiserstadt Nikomedien, wo die Wahl eines neuen Bischofs anstand. Dieser Brief zeigt wie in einem Spiegel, welche Eigenschaften ein guter Bischof haben müsse. Er soll hauptsächlich ein Mann mit geistlichen Erfahrungen sein, ein „pneumatikos“. Eine durch Ordination vermittelte apostolische Sukzession und eine damit verbundene Amtsgnade wird nicht erwähnt. Erstaunlich ist, dass Gregor beim ersten römischen Bischof Petrus diesen nicht Petrus als den „Fels“ der Kirche mit Binde- und Lösegehalt bezeichnet (vgl. Mt 16.16–19), sondern als einfachen „Fischer“ und so als normalen Christen vorstellt. Jeder gute Bischof solle sich die Propheten und Apostel in der Bibel zum Vorbild nehmen: „Ein Ziegenhirt war der Prophet Amos, ein Fischer Petrus und vom selben Beruf waren sein Bruder Andreas und der hohe Johannes. Ein Zeltenäher war Paulus; Matthäus war ein Zöllner ...“¹⁸. Aus abendländischer Sicht ist sehr interessant, wie Petrus hier nicht

15 R. Staats, „Gregor von Nyssa und das Bischofsamt“, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 84 (1973) 149–173; K. Fitschen, *Messalianismus und Antimesalianismus*, 244–245.

16 *Epist* I 30 (GNO VIII/2 11; tr. Pasquali 54); *Codex Theodosianus* XVI,1,3 (SC 497, 116).

17 K. Fitschen, *Messalianismus und Antimesalianismus*, 25–41.

18 *Epist* XVII 11 (GNO VIII/2 54; tr. Pasquali 54).

an erster Stelle genannt und hervorgehoben wird, sondern Petrus ist einge-reiht in einer Reihe mit dem Propheten Amos und anderen Aposteln. Kardinal Jean Daniélou hatte seinerzeit diesen siebzehnten Brief auch als einen Traditionsbeweis für die Konzilskonstitution „De Ecclesia“ auf dem II. Vatikanischen Konzil empfohlen, weil hier der Gedanke der Kollegialität und Apostolizität und auch die bischöflichen Aufgaben konkret beschrieben waren.¹⁹ Wirklich erfordert, wie Gregor meint, die Wahl eines neuen Bischofs für Nikomedien, dass die Gemeinde einen „Geistbegabten“ (*pneumatikos*) sucht. In Nikomedien scheint Gregor damit aber keinen Erfolg gehabt zu haben. Denn es kam ganz anders. Aus der Kirchengeschichte des Sozomenos erfahren wir, dass Johannes Chrysostomus im Jahr 397 die Absetzung eines akademisch gelehrten Arztes und zugleich Bischofs mit dem Namen Gerontios in Nikomedien verfügen musste.²⁰ Diesem Gerontios wurden aber dort gerade seine Weltläufigkeit, seine sozialen Taten und auch sein guter wissenschaftlicher Ruf nachgerühmt. Gerontios war vor seiner Karriere im Orient ein Diakon in Mailand gewesen, wo er auch schon vom großen Bischof Ambrosius, dem Lehrer des Kirchenvater Augustins, entlassen werden musste. Die Entlassung aus dem Bischofsamt in Nikomedien durch Chrysostomus war also schon die zweite Vertreibung des Gerontios aus einem hohen geistlichen Amt.²¹

Es gibt weitere Aussagen Gregors von Nyssa, die auf eine starke Präsenz von Asketen aus Syrien in Kleinasien und bis nach Konstantinopel schließen lassen. Gregor suchte diese Asketen vor den Gefahren einer übertriebenen Spiritualität zu bewahren und begegnete ihnen daher auch als Seelsorger mit einer gewissen Sympathie, so schon in seiner frühen asketischen Schrift „De Virginitate“, die sich stark am großen Vorbild seines Bruders Basilius orientiert.²² Sehr deutlich ist Gregors Parteinahme für Asketen aus dem syrisch-mesopotamischen Raum in einer großartigen Rede mit dem merkwürdigen und irreführenden Titel „In suam ordinationem“ („Auf seine Wahl“). Gemeint war wohl doch ein Titel wie „In Gregorii ordinationem“. Das würde bedeuten, dass diese Rede Gregor von Nyssa gehalten hatte „auf die Wahl“ seines Namensvetters Gregor von Nazianz zum Präsidenten auf dem Zweiten ökumenischen Konzil von Konstantinopel 381. Diese Überschrift passt auch zum kirchenpolitischen Kontext der Rede. Zum Schluss lobt Gregor auch eine Gruppe frommer

19 J. Daniélou, „L'évêque d'après une lettre de Gregoire de Nysse“, *Euntes docete* 20 (1967) 85–97. Siehe aber auch R. Staats, „Gregor von Nyssa und das Bischofsamt“, 153–154.

20 Sozomenos, *HE* VIII,6.

21 *Ibidem*, 157–160.

22 R. Staats, „Basilius als lebende Mönchsregel in Gregors von Nyssa *De virginitate*“, *Vigiliae Christianae* 39 (1985) 228–255.

und tatsächlich auf dem Konzil in Konstantinopel anwesender Asketen aus Mesopotamien mit folgenden Worten²³:

„Was ist nun schuld daran, dass einst zur Zeit der Jünger durch den Herrn viel Volk der Kirche zugeführt wurde, jetzt aber die langen und prächtigen Predigten der Lehrer am Ohr vorbeirauschen, ohne in die Tat umgesetzt umgesetzt zu werden? Vielleicht wird jemand sagen, dass damals den Aposteln vollbrachte Wunder zu Hilfe kamen und die Predigt durch die Gnadengaben glaubwürdig wurde. Ich erachte ja die Taten unserer Mitknechte für die eigenen, da sie in demselben Geist wandeln und durch die Macht ihrer Heilung an Kranken für die Wahrheit ihrer Predigt Zeugnis ablegen. Es sind Männer, die aus dem Ausland kommen, Landsleute unseres Vaters Abraham, die von Mesopotamien aufgebrochen sind. Auch sie haben (wie Abraham) ihr Land, ihre Verwandtschaft und die ganze Welt verlassen. Sie blicken himmelwärts. Sie wandern gewissermaßen aus dem menschlichen Leben aus, stehen über den menschlichen Leidenschaften und haben ein Verhältnis zu diesem Leben nur, sofern es notwendig ist; zum größeren Teil aber verkehren sie mit den unkörperlichen Mächten droben. Sie sind Greise dem Aussehen nach, ehrwürdig anzuschauen, mit leuchtend weißen Haaren, den Mund zum Schweigen geschlossen. Sie wissen nicht mit Worten zu fechten; sie haben nicht gelernt zu diskutieren. Sie haben eine solche Macht gegen die [bösen] Geister, dass sie auf bloßen Befehl eine eitle Lehrmeinung kaputt machen und sie die Dämonen nicht durch syllogistische Künste, sondern durch die Macht des Glaubens vertreiben, indem diese in die Lage versetzt werden, nicht widersprechen zu können und sie verbannt werden in die äußerste Finsternis. So weiß der Christ Syllogismen zu machen! Das sind unsere Glaubenstaten! Weshalb überzeugen wir also nicht, wenn die Gnade der Krankenheilung zunimmt, wenn die Lehre aus [solcher] Predigt zunimmt. Alles das wirkt ein und derselbe Geist, der jedem zuteilt, wie er will. Warum wird die Zahl der Geretteten nicht größer? Ja, niemand möge annehmen, dass ich die gegenwärtige Gnade für gering halte. Ich sehe den Weinstock in vollem Wachstum mit reichen Reben und viel Frucht. Ich sehe das Land wogend voller Ähren; weit das Erntefeld, üppig die Garbe, reich die Saat.“

23 *Deit Euag* (vulgo *In suam ordinationem oratio*; GNO IX, 337–338). Siehe auch R. Staats, *Das Glaubensbekenntnis von Nizäa-Konstantinopel. Historische und Theologische Grundlagen*, 2. Ed., Darmstadt 1999, 94–104.

Schließlich erzählt Gregor ein Gleichnis, um seinen Lesern einzuprägen, wie herrlich die Erfahrung des Heiligen Geistes im Leben eines Asketen sein kann²⁴:

„Wenn jemand über Mittag unterwegs ist und wenn die Sonne mit ihren heißen Strahlen auf seinem Kopf brennt ... Und wenn er eine Quelle findet, die sauber und klar sprudelt, wird der sich dann ans Wasser setzen und über dessen Wesen philosophieren, um das ‚Woher‘ und ‚Wie‘ und ‚Wodurch‘ und Ähnliches zu ergründen, wie es bei Leuten ist, die leere Worte machen? Oder wird er nicht das alles auf sich beruhen lassen, wird sich zum Nassen herabbeugen, seine Lippen ansetzen und seinen Durst stillen, wird den Mund erquicken und sein Verlangen stillen und dem Dank sagen, der ihm diese Gabe geschenkt hat. Tu auch du es dem Dürstenden nach!“

Die ganze Rede endet mit der in ein Psalmzitat versteckten Ankündigung der Gesandten aus Ägypten, nachdem die Verhandlungen mit den Pneumatomachen gescheitert und diese aus Konstantinopel abgereist waren²⁵:

„Öffne deinen Mund und der, der die Macht hat über Gnadengaben, wird ihn füllen. Willst du wissen, welche Güter aus der Quelle des Geistes hervorströmen? Unvergänglichkeit der Seele, ewiges Leben, das Himmelreich, unaufhörliche Lust, Freude ohne Ende. Wenn ich nämlich auf das sehe, was hier ist, halte ich den Mangel an dem, was noch fehlte, für gering. Denn mein Haus ist voll von Gütern, voll sind die Schatzkammern vom Golde Arabiens. Es werden vielleicht sogar bald [vgl. Ps 67.32 f. LXX] *Gesandte aus Ägypten* kommen und werden ihre Hand zu Gott ausstrecken und die Reiche der Erde werden zu dem ein Siegeslied singen, der alle zu seinem Reiche beruft. Ihm sei Ehre und Macht in Ewigkeit.“

Die Datierung dieser Gregor-Rede und ihre Lokalisierung auf das zweite ökumenische Konzil von Konstantinopel im Jahr 381 wurden angeregt von Gerhard May.²⁶ Meine Interpretation der Rede als ein wichtiger Kontext in der Geschichte des Messalianismus wurde von Henry Chadwick bestätigt. Denn

24 *Deit Euag* (GNO IX 340, 4–19).

25 *Deit Euag* (341, 1–12).

26 G. May, „Die Datierung der Rede *In suam ordinationem* des Gregor von Nyssa“, *Vigiliae Christianae* 23 (1969) 38–57; R. Staats, *Das Glaubensbekenntnis von Nizäa-Konstantinopel. Historische und Theologische Grundlagen*, 94 f., 328 Anm. 147.

der Oxforder Dean of Christ-Church schrieb in seinem letzten großen Werk zum zweiten ökumenischen Konzil von Konstantinopel im Jahre 381 auch das Folgende²⁷:

The Messalians were individual sympathizers with few bishops, despite their tendency to disparage the sacramental and ordered life of the church. Of their sympathizers the most notable was Gregory of Nyssa. A sermon he preached probably at Constantinople at the time of the council of 381 speaks in glowing terms of ascetics coming from the east whose faith and devotion are exemplary.

Ein geistliches Verständnis des Durstes hat Gregor auch in seiner Hohelied-Auslegung etliche Male bezeugt, wobei er sich jedesmal auf den Satz Jesu im Johannesevangelium (Jn 7.37) bezog: „Wenn einer dürstet, soll er zu mir kommen und trinken“. Gregors „In Canticum“ erzählt vom geistlichen Durst im Kontext einer Kritik an „langen und prächtigen Predigten der Lehrer“, die nur Intellektuelle sind und deren Worte am Ohr vorbeirauschen.²⁸ Dagegen preist ja auch Gregors Konzilsrede die Asketen aus Mesopotamien, dass sie „nicht mit Worten zu fechten“ wissen; sie haben nicht gelernt zu diskutieren. Sie haben sich nicht ans Wasser gesetzt und „über dessen Wesen philosophiert ... wie es bei Leuten üblich ist, die leere Worte machen“. Ein sehr ähnliches „geistliches“ Verständnis des menschlichen Durstes, aber ohne polemischen Seitenhieb gegen geistlose Zeitgenossen, habe ich bisher nur bei Makarios-Symeon in der zwölften seiner „Geistlichen Homilien“ gefunden. Gregor von Nyssa könnte davon sehr wohl inspiriert gewesen sein²⁹:

„Gehe hin an das Ufer des Flusses und trink, soviel du nötig hast! Gehe wieder fort und forsche nicht, woher er kommt oder wie er fließt! Kommt das Kindlein an die Mutterbrust, so wird es gesäugt und genährt. Es versteht nicht, nach der Wurzel oder der Quelle zu forschen, woraus sie fließt“.

Makarios-Symeon war ein, modern gesagt, romantischer und christlicher Psychologe. Für ihn war der Verstand des Menschen (*nus*) nicht gebunden an

27 H. Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, Oxford 2001.

28 *Cant* I zu Ct 1.2a (GNO VI 32); *Cant* VIII zu Ct 4.9 (GNO VI 248); *Cant* XI zu Ct 5.3 (GNO VI 327).

29 Die fünfzig geistlichen *Homilien* (H) 12,12 (tr. H. Dörries – E. Klostermann – M. Kroeger, *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*, 113, 137–156).

kirchliche Räume oder stoffliche Bilder in den Kirchen. Den eigentlichen Sinn Gottes kann man überall finden: „Unter der Erde, über dem Himmel, oder in uns. Er ist überall. So ist auch deine Seele dir nahe. Sie ist in dir und sie ist außer dir ...“.

In der dreißigsten Homilie erzählt Makarios-Symeon sogar ein schönes Gleichnis, worin Christus selbst mit einem Kunstmaler verglichen wird. Gerade in diesem Gleichnis wird deutlich, dass sozusagen ein von Christus gemalter Mensch stillhalten muss, damit das Bild schön gelingt. In einem Schluss „*a minore ad maius*“ erscheint Christus hier selbst wie ein himmlischer Kunstmaler. Aus dem Gleichnis darf man wohl auch schließen, dass im vierten Jahrhundert in Kleinasien noch nicht Jesus Christus als gemaltes Porträt in Kirchen üblich war. Jesus Christus ist der Künstler und der Mensch soll ein Kunstwerk Jesu Christi sein. Es soll sich, wie es hier heißt, das Bild Christi der menschlichen Seele als ein „himmlisches Bild“ einprägen, sobald sich der Mensch darauf auch ausrichtet. In der dreißigsten Homilie (30,3–4) lesen wir nämlich³⁰: „Wie der Leib ohne Seele tot (Jak 2.26) und unfähig ist, so ist die Seele, ohne die himmlische Seele, ohne den göttlichen Geist für das Reich tot; ohne den Geist kann sie nichts Göttliches tun. Der Maler schaut auf das Gesicht des Königs und malt. Ist das Gesicht des Königs dem Maler zugewandt, so dass es zu ihm hinsieht, so malt der Maler das Bild leicht und schön nach dem Leben. Wendet der König aber das Gesicht von ihm weg, so kann er nicht malen, weil jener nicht auf den Maler hinschaut. Ebenso malt auch Christus, der gute Maler, in diejenigen, die an ihn glauben und immerdar auf ihn hinschauen, sogleich nach seinem Bilde einen himmlischen Menschen. Aus seinem eigenen Geiste, aus seiner Wesensart, aus seinem unaussprechlichen Lichtwesen malt er selbst ein himmlisches Bild und gibt der Seele ihren edlen, guten Bräutigam. Hat darum jemand seinen Blick nicht beständig auf ihn gerichtet und sieht über alles hinweg, so wird der Herr sein Bild aus seinem Lichte nicht malen. Deshalb müssen wir unverwandten Blickes auf ihn sehen, glauben, ihn lieben, alles entfernen und zu ihm hin uns wenden, auf dass er sein eigenes, himmlisches Bild male und es unseren Seelen einpräge, damit wir so als Träger Christi ewiges Leben erlangen und hiermit in voller Gewissheit Ruhe finden ...“.

Schon in der älteren Makarios-Forschung wurde eine große Nähe gerade dieses Gleichnisses vom Kunstmaler zur fünfzehnten Homilie Gregors von Nyssa „In Canticum“ festgestellt. Jedoch meinte man, Makarios habe dieses Gleichnis von Gregor „entlehnt“.³¹ In der älteren Forschung bis zu Werner Jaeger war man ja auch davon überzeugt, dass Gregor von Nyssa von einem angeblich

30 Homilie 30, 3–4 (tr. Dörries – Klostermann – Kröeger, 242, 40–60).

31 Dieser Vergleich sei „wohl direkt aus Gregor von Nyssa ... entlehnt.“ So Joseph Stiglmayer

späteren Makarios noch gar nicht beeinflusst gewesen sein konnte. Doch das Umgekehrte ist der Fall: Makarios-Symeon ist der ältere Prediger, und Gregor von Nyssa hat offenbar von diesem Mönchsvater manche Homilie gut gekannt, nicht nur dessen Großen Brief. Denn offensichtlich hatte Gregor dieses schöne Gleichnis in leichter theologischer Abwandlung und Verkürzung von Makarios-Symeon entlehnt. In Gregors Hohelied-Auslegung von Canticum 15 (zu Hoheslied Salomos 6,3) lesen wir³²:

„Derjenige der erkennt, dass auf der Leinwand das Gemälde mit Sorgfalt einem bestimmten Urbild nachgebildet ist, erklärt damit, dass die Gestalt der Beiden (Figuren) ein und dieselbe ist, indem er sagt, die Schönheit, die sich am Abbild zeigt, sei die des Originals und das Urbild [*to archetypon*] sei anschaulich in seiner Nachbildung zu sehen. In eben derselben Weise bringt sie [die Braut] nun mit den Worten: *Ich bin meinem Brudersohne gleich und mein Brudersohn mir* [Ct 6.3a] zum Ausdruck, sie sei Christus gleichgestaltet worden, weil sie die eigene Schönheit wiedererlangte, die ursprüngliche Seligkeit unserer Natur, schön gemacht nach dem Bild und Gleichnis [Gn 1.26] der ersten, einzigen und wahren Schönheit.“

Auch Gregor von Nyssa setzt also in diesem Gleichnis kein von Menschenhand geschaffenes Christusbild voraus, sondern ihm geht es ebenso wie Makarios-Symeon um die Gleichgestaltung eines Menschen mit Christus als ein Abbild des Urbildes Christus: „Die ursprüngliche Seligkeit unserer Natur“ wieder zu erreichen, soll Ziel unseres menschlichen Lebens sein.³³

(1911), dem sich Dionys Stiefenhofer in seiner deutschen Übersetzung der *Fünfundfünfzig Homilien des Makarios* angeschlossen hatte, in: *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter*, Band 10 (1913) 257.

32 Cant XV zu Ct 6.3 (GNO VI 439,11–20).

33 Franz Dünzl übersetzt in seiner griechisch-deutschen Ausgabe der In-Canticum-Homilien das griechische Wort „pinax“ mit dem deutschen Wort Holztafel und schreibt dazu in einer Fußnote: „Wir würden sagen: ‚auf der Leinwand‘. Doch ist uns die Verwendung von Holztafeln aus der Ikonenmalerei geläufig“ (F. Dünzl, *Gregor von Nyssa, Homilien zum Hohenlied*, Fontes Christiani 16/3, Freiburg 1994, 780). Aber solche Voraussetzung einer Ikonenmalerei in der Umgebung Gregors von Nyssa ist anachronistisch.

Anhang: Textparallelen im Werk des Gregor von Nyssa „In Canticum“ und in der „Epistola Magna“, in den „Logoi“ und in den „Fünfundzwanzig geistlichen Homilien“ des Makarios-Symeon

Es gibt zahlreiche ähnliche Motive und Begriffe in Gregors „In Canticum“ und in „De instituto christiano“, die man ebenso bei Makarios-Symeon in seiner „Epistola Magna“ und in seinen berühmten „Fünfundzwanzig Geistlichen Homilien“ finden kann. Die dreibändige und verdienstvolle griechisch-deutsche Ausgabe von „In Canticum“, die Franz Dünzl 1994 besorgte, scheint freilich solche Parallelen nicht zu kennen. Sowohl in der Einleitung als auch in den Anmerkungen macht der Übersetzer den Eindruck, dass ihm dieses seit 1967 in der Gregor-Forschung bekannte Thema nicht bekannt oder gar nicht wichtig war. Im Folgenden nenne ich ähnliche und sogar identische Motive und Begriffe, die einerseits in Gregors „In Canticum“ (ed. H. Langerbeck) und in „De instituto christiano“ (ed. W. Jaeger) vorkommen und andererseits in Schriften des Makarios-Symeon, nämlich in der Sammlung der „64 Logoi“ (ed. H. Berthold), hier zitiert „B“, in der Epistola Magna (ed. R. Staats), hier zitiert „EM“ und in den berühmten „Fünfundzwanzig geistlichen Homilien“ (ed. H. Dörries – E. Klostermann – M. Kroeger), hier zitiert „H“. Die Parallelen verdeutlichen, dass Gregor von Nyssa auch in die Geschichte des frühen „Messalianismus“ gehört. Sie können auch seine eigene und sehr persönliche Theologie erklären. Die Parallelen zeigen auch, dass sich Gregor durchaus mit dem geistlichen und seelsorgerlichen Werk des Makarios-Symeon verbunden fühlte.

Parallelen in der Pneumatologie

- a) Gregor: Göttlicher „Eros“ ist aktive Liebe (Dünzl: „intensivierte Agape“), welche die materielle Welt überwindet. „Eros“ ist auch Liebe zur Weisheit und zur Tugend *Cant* I (GNO VI 21–23), *Cant* VI (GNO VI 192), *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 383); cf. *De instituto* 1,1 (GNO VIII/1 40–89). – Makarios: „Eros“ wird weniger platonisch und daher auch weniger origenistisch verstanden. Denn „Eros“ ist mehr ein Gefühl: Eine „sehnstüchtige Ergriffenheit vom göttlichen Eros“: H 4,16 (= B 49, 4,6); H 10, EM 7,1–11; 8,3; 9,1–4.
- b) Gregor: Die Verbindung mit dem Heiligen Geist wird auch erotisch verstanden unter Berufung auf Paulus: „Jeder, der mit dem Herrn verbunden ist, der ist ein Geist mit ihm“ (1 Cor 6.17): *Cant* I (GNO VI 23; 25; 32). Vgl. *De instituto* 9,14 (GNO VIII/1 40–89). – Makarios H 4,10 (= B 49, 2,9); H 9,11 (= B 15,2–3); H 16,2 (= B 46,1,4); H 24, 3,6. Beide, Gregor und Makarios, interpretieren 1 Cor 6.17 viel mehr pneumatologisch als Origenes.
- c) Gregor: Die geistliche Gemeinschaft mit Christus wird mit einer ehelichen Gemeinschaft verglichen: „Syzygia“: *Cant* I (GNO VI 15, 22, 24); *Cant*

- IV (GNO VI 108); cf. *De virginitate* 15; 20 (GNO VIII/1 247–429; 247–429). – Makarios: H 16,2 (= B 46, 1,4); H 38,5; H 53,11. Makarios bietet keine Lehre über eine normale Ehe. Das war aus großkirchlicher Sicht ein Problem.³⁴
- d) Gregor: Der bei der Taufe von Jesus wie eine Taube herabkommende Geist bedeutet wirklich die Parusie des heiligen Geistes: *Cant V* (GNO VI 151). Vgl. *De instituto* 3,2 (GNO VIII/1 40–89). – Makarios: Wie in der exegetischen Tradition bezieht Makarios den Begriff „parusia“ nur auf das irdische Leben Jesu: H 15,15; H47, 5. Doch in den Synodalakten gegen die Messalianer finden wir die Anklage, dass die Messalianer die Erfahrung und die „Parusia“ des heiligen Geistes in intensivem Gebet erlebt haben wollen.³⁵
- e) Gregor: Eine besonders intensive „Synergie“ von Gebet und Führung durch den heiligen Geist schenkt die Erkenntnis göttlicher Gedanken: *Cant X* (GNO VI 294). Cf. *De instituto* 2,3; 9,17 (GNO VIII/1 40–89). – Makarios EM 2,3; 3,1; 9,3.
- f) Gregor: Die natürlichen leiblichen Sinne sind zu unterscheiden von inneren seelischen Sinnen: *Cant III* (GNO VI 34). Jean Daniélou meinte, dass Gregors Lehre von den fünf Sinnen überhaupt die Essenz seiner mystischen Theologie gewesen sei.³⁶ – Makarios: H 4,7 (= B 49,2, 1–3). Die Lehre von den „geistlichen Sinnen“ unterscheidet Gregor und Makarios von Origenes (vgl. Origenes, *Contra Celsum* IV, 4)!³⁷
- g) Gregor: Der heilige Geist glüht und brennt wie ein Feuer im Herzen: *Cant III* (GNO VI 94); *Cant VII* (GNO VI 234f.). – Makarios: H 24,9–10; H14,7 (= B 14,5).

Parallelen in der Ethik

- a) Gregor: Zentral ist der geistliche Fortschritt und das Werden und Wachsen hin zu einem hohen geistlichen Alter (vgl. NT Eph. 4,11–16) und das Vorwärtstreben („epektasis“, vgl. NT Phil 3,13): *Cant III* (GNO VI 95); *Cant V* (GNO VI 158f.); *Cant VI* (GNO VI 174f.); *Cant IX* (GNO 280f.); *Cant XII* (GNO VI 354); *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 382f.); *Cant XV* (GNO VI 460, 465–467). *De instituto* 5,3 (GNO VIII/1 40–89). Diesen für Gregor und auch für Makarios so wichtigen Begriff „Geistliches Alter“ gibt es nicht im Neuen Testa-

34 K. Fitschen, *Messalianismus und Antimessalianismus*, 196.

35 K. Fitschen, *Messalianismus und Antimessalianismus*, 227.

36 J. Daniélou, *Platonism et Théologie Mystique*, Paris 1944, 222–252.

37 Siehe dazu aber auch die apokryphe *Epistola apostolorum* 43/54, womöglich aus Syrien im zweiten Jahrhundert: R. Staats, „Die törichten Jungfrauen von Matthäus 25 in gnostischer und antignostischer Literatur“, in: W. Eltester, *Christentum und Gnosis, Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, Beiheft 37, Berlin 1969, 98–116.

- ment! – Makarios: Die Lehre vom Fortschreiten, von „Ausweitung“ und „Wachsen“ hin zu einem „geistlichen Alter“ ist sehr typisch für Makarios. Es gibt dazu viele Stellen im Gesamtwerk des Makarios. Ganz wichtig ist für ihn dieser Begriff „Geistliches Alter“, der gar nicht im Neuen Testament vorkommt: EM 1,2; 2,4; 3,1. Vgl. *Cant I* (GNO VI 38,18); *Cant XV* (GNO VI 460,21). Aber in *De instituto* bevorzugt Gregor den Begriff „Vernünftiges Alter“ (*Inst* 3,11; 9,15 [GNO VIII/1 40–89]).
- b) Gregor: Kain opferte nicht die „ersten“ Gaben (vgl. Gn 4.1.16) und erfüllte daher nicht das erste Gebot der Liebe (Mt 22.37–40): *Cant IV* (GNO VI 121f.). *De instituto* 7,10–11 (GNO VIII/1 40–89). Makarios bietet dieselbe Exegese: EM 7,10–11. Das entspricht auch einer alten christlich-arabischen Tradition.³⁸
- c) Gregor: Die Lehre vom „Freien Willen“ hat hier ihr Hauptargument aus Paulus, Rm 7.23: *Cant II* (GNO VI 56f.). – Makarios argumentiert fast ebenso: H 27, 2 (= B 7,11).
- d) Gregor: Christen, die in einer „Ekstase“ weg vom Materiellen hin zum Göttlichen sind, machen die Erfahrung eines geistlichen „Frühlings“: *Cant V* (GNO VI 155). – Makarios: H 5,9 (B 48,6,3–5); H 12,14.
- e) Gregor: Das christliche Leben mit Tugenden wird mit dem Symbol einer „Kette“ symbolisiert (vgl. Ct 1.10): *Cant III* (GNO VI 79–82); *Cant V* (GNO VI 150); *De instituto* 8,1–3 (GNO VIII/1 40–89). – Makarios: EM 8,1–13; H 40 (= B 4,1).

Literatur

Chadwick, H. *The Church in Ancient Society*, Oxford 2001.

Daniélou, J. *Platonism et Théologie Mystique*, Paris 1944;

Daniélou, J. „L'évêque d'après une lettre de Grégoire de Nysse“, *Euntes docete* 20 (1967) 85–97;

Daniélou, J. „Orientations actuelles de la recherche sur Grégoire de Nysse“, in: M. Harl (éd.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du colloque de Chevetogne (22–26 septembre 1969)*, Leiden 1971, 3–17.

Dörries, H. – E. Klostermann – M. Kroeger, *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarios* (PTS 4), Berlin 1964.

Dörries, H. *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon*, Göttingen 1978.

38 R. Staats, „Gebet ist Liebe zu Gott“, in: E. Campi – L. Grane – A.M. Ritter (eds.), *Oratio. Das Gebet in patristischer und reformatorischer Sicht. Zum judenchristlichen Hintergrund der Gebetslehre des Makarios-Symeon*, Göttingen 1999, 129–137.

- Dünzl, F. *Gregor von Nyssa, Homilien zum Hohenlied*, Fontes Christiani 16/3, Freiburg 1994.
- Fitschen, K. *Messalianismus und Antimessealianismus. Ein Beispiel ostkirchlicher Ketzer-geschichte* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 71), Göttingen 1998.
- Jaeger, W. (ed.) *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, VIII, Pars I, Leiden 1952;
- Jaeger, W. *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, Cambridge (Ma) 1961;
- Jaeger, W. *Gregor von Nyssas Lehre vom Heiligen Geist. Aus dem Nachlass herausgegeben von Hermann Dörries*, Leiden 1966.
- Kollwitz, J. „Bild III“, *RAC* 2 (1954) 319–320.
- Mango, C. *The Homilies of Photios. Patriarch of Constantinople, English Translation, Introduction and Commentaries*, Cambridge (Ma) 1958.
- May, G. „Die Datierung der Rede *In suam ordinationem* des Gregor von Nyssa“, *Vigiliae Christianae* 23 (1969) 38–57
- Prosser, G.D. „A defense of Icons during the Messalian Controversy“, *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993) 444–450.
- Staats, R. *Gregor von Nyssa und die Messalianer. Die Frage der Priorität zweier altkirchlicher Schriften* (PTS 8), Berlin 1968;
- Staats, R. „Die törichten Jungfrauen von Matthäus 25 in gnostischer und antignostischer Literatur“, in: W. Eltester, *Christentum und Gnosis, Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, Beiheft 37, Berlin 1969, 98–116;
- Staats, R. „Gregor von Nyssa und das Bischofsamt“, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 84 (1973) 149–173;
- Staats, R. „Photios and the Synodikon of Orthodoxy in opposition to mystical and prophetic heresies“, *The Patristic and Byzantine Review* 2 (1983) 162–173;
- Staats, R. „Messalianerforschung und Ostkirchenkunde“, in: W. Strothmann (Hg.), *Makarios-Symposium über das Böse (Göttinger Orientforschungen 24)*, Wiesbaden 1983, 47–71;
- Staats, R. (ed.). *Makarios-Symeon, Epistola Magna. Eine messalianische Mönchsregel und ihre Umschrift in Gregors von Nyssa De instituto christiano*, Göttingen 1984;
- Staats, R. „Basilus als lebende Mönchsregel in Gregors von Nyssa *De virginitate*“, *Vigiliae Christianae* 39 (1985) 228–255;
- Staats, R. „Messalianer“, *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 22 (1993) 607–613;
- Staats, R. „Gebet ist Liebe zu Gott“, in: E. Campi – L. Grane – A.M. Ritter (eds.), *Oratio. Das Gebet in patristischer und reformatorischer Sicht. Zum judenchristlichen Hintergrund der Gebetslehre des Makarios-Symeon*, Göttingen 1999, 129–137;
- Staats, R. *Das Glaubensbekenntnis von Nizäa-Konstantinopel. Historische und Theologische Grundlagen*, 2. Ed., Darmstadt 1999.
- Thümmel, H.G. „Der byzantinische Bilderstreit. Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung“, in: J. Irmscher (Hg.), *Der byzantinische Bilderstreit*, Leipzig 1980, 9–34;
- Thümmel, H.G. *Die Konzilien zur Bilderfrage im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert*, Paderborn 2005.

Gregorio di Nissa interprete del *Cantico dei Cantici*

Manlio Simonetti (†)

I

Per l'apprezzamento critico della tecnica esegetica messa in opera da Gregorio di Nissa nell'interpretazione del *Cantico dei Cantici*, che è il tema specifico della mia relazione, è ineludibile, ancorché più che abusato, il richiamo a Origene, il cui nome è prodotto esplicitamente dal Nisseno nel prologo del commentario.¹ Ma proprio questa citazione e, più in generale, l'argomento trattato nel prologo immettono l'opera di Gregorio in un contesto polemico dal quale il nostro apprezzamento, per non riuscire meramente astratto, non può prescindere. Quando infatti il Nisseno, pur senza far nomi, difende l'interpretazione allegorizzante del testo biblico, egli intende contrapporsi alle violente critiche che, in ambiente siropalestinese, con sempre maggiore consapevolezza critica venivano mosse alla *ratio interpretandi* alessandrina. Aveva cominciato Eustazio di Antiochia (fine III-inizio IV sec.), e al tempo di Gregorio il rappresentante più significativo dell'opposizione, che si suole definire antiochena, era Diodoro di Tarso.² Di lì a poco Teodoro di Mopsuestia avrebbe polemicamente esplicitato l'oggetto della sua critica nei nomi di Filone e Origene. Qui della difesa di Gregorio ci limitiamo a richiamare l'argomento dell'*opheleia*, il fondamento nel quale trovava giustificazione l'allegorismo dell'esegesi alessandrina: quale utilità, osserva il Nisseno, può trarre il lettore o ascoltatore da tanti racconti immorali o ingenuamente antropomorfi che si leggono nell'Antico Testamento, se li si intendono soltanto in senso letterale?³

L'unica concessione che egli fa ai letteralisti è di ambito terminologico, vale a dire la rinuncia a far uso del termine *allegoria*, rinuncia tanto più agevole in quanto questo termine, in ambito cristiano, nonostante l'isolata occorrenza in Paolo,⁴ era stato sempre avvertito come troppo compromesso con l'interpretazione filosofica dei miti omerici e anche in uso presso gli gnostici. In effetti solo Clemente, sulla traccia di Filone, aveva fatto uso senza remore di *alle-*

1 *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 13,3).

2 Per dettagliata informazione in argomento rinvio al mio *Lettera e/o allegoria. Un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica*, Roma 1985, 124 ss., 156 ss.

3 *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 6–7).

4 Gal 4,24.

goria e derivati, e Origene lo aveva seguito, ma solo *iuxta modum*.⁵ Rinuncia perciò di minimo conto, mentre appare significativa, tra gli svariati altri termini con i quali Gregorio definisce l'interpretazione allegorica della Scrittura, la preferenza per *ainigma* e derivati, in quanto questo termine, stante la sua ampiezza di significato, indicante genericamente un parlare coperto, oscuro, era in uso anche presso l'antiocheno Diodoro.⁶ Per venire ora all'alessandrino di Gregorio nell'interpretazione del *Cantico*, ancora alcuni anni fa revocato in dubbio,⁷ ha ben poco senso parlare genericamente di interpretazione allegorica, in quanto l'argomento del *Cantico* poteva assumere significato religioso, o anche solo moralmente valido, soltanto se trasferito dal livello materiale a quello spirituale, il che implicava l'allegorizzazione sistematica del testo. Così aveva fatto, già prima di Origene, l'asiatico Ippolito, e così avrebbe fatto, qualche decennio dopo Gregorio e Diodoro, l'antiocheno Teodoreto. Ciò posto, per definire di tipo alessandrino l'allegorismo dell'interpretazione gregoriana del *Cantico*, bisogna entrare più nel dettaglio.

II

In questo senso va rilevato il procedimento di interpretare la Scrittura con la Scrittura. Intendo con questa definizione non il semplice confortare l'interpretazione di un dato passo biblico col supporto di uno o anche più altri passi scritturistici, ma il procedimento per cui un testo scritturistico ne richiama un altro per qualche verso affine, la cui interpretazione non solo dilata e approfondisce quella del testo in esame ma richiama un altro passo ancora, e così via, in una catena il cui significato finale può arrivare molto lontano dal punto di partenza. Era stato uno dei procedimenti esegetici prediletti da Origene, ed è ben rappresentato nell'interpretazione gregoriana del *Cantico*. Mi limito a un paio di esempi. In Ct 5,3 la donna dice: "Mi sono tolta la tunica". Immediato il

5 Cf. in argomento il mio *Origene esegeta e la sua tradizione*, Brescia 2004, 51 ss.

6 Quanto ad alcune occorrenze di termini tecnici nel commento al *Cantico* di Gregorio, si veda, oltre *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 5: ὑπόνοια, αἰνίγμα, τροπολογία, ἀλληγορία, θεωρία διὰ τῆς ἀναγωγῆς): αἰνίγμα (GNO VI 19; 52; 109; 126; 152; 161; 264; 275; 299; 324); τροπικός, -κῶς (GNO VI 46; 83; 152; 274; 326; 392); τύπος / ἀλήθεια (GNO VI 161; 248; 392); μεταφορά (GNO VI 79); ὑπόνοια (GNO VI 324); πρόχειρος ἔννοια (GNO VI 140); διάνοια (GNO VI 144); σύμβολον, -λικός (GNO VI 161; 374); θεωρία κατὰ ἀναγωγὴν (GNO VI 144; 145); πνευματικὴ θεωρία (GNO VI 190; 412; 436); γράμμα (GNO VI 190).

7 Cf. J.B. Cahill, "The date and setting of Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*", *JThS* 32 (1981) 459.

collegamento con le tuniche di pelle di Gn 3.21; di qui il richiamo a Col 3.9–10, spogliarsi dell'uomo vecchio e rivestirsi del nuovo, fino a Mt 10.10, non portare in viaggio due tuniche, a Mk 2.21, non cucire un pezzo di stoffa nuova su un vestito vecchio, a Mt 17.2, le vesti candide di Gesù trasfigurato. Quindi la donna che depone la tunica significa l'anima che depone la carnalità e la propensione al male di cui si è rivestita dopo il peccato, e riveste la nuova tunica dell'uomo creato a immagine di Dio, una sola tunica, non due inconciliabili tra loro come la luce e le tenebre, senza rattoppare la tunica vecchia con un tessuto nuovo che ne accentuerebbe la bruttezza, ma una tunica luminosa di purezza e incorruttibilità, come quella rivestita da Gesù trasfigurato.⁸ In Ct 5.15 le gambe dello sposo sono assimilate a colonne di marmo su basi d'oro. Le colonne richiamano prima quelle del palazzo che la sapienza si è edificata,⁹ poi quelle della tenda della testimonianza.¹⁰ Gal 2.9, in cui Paolo definisce colonne della chiesa Pietro Giacomo e Giovanni, suggerisce il fulcro dell'interpretazione del passo del *Cantico*: colonne della chiesa sono stati gli apostoli, e anche noi, osserva Gregorio, possiamo diventare tali, se non avremo altro fondamento che Cristo,¹¹ praticando il precetto dell'amore di Dio e del prossimo,¹² le due colonne che sostengono tutto il corpo della chiesa.¹³

Un altro procedimento esegetico di tipo alessandrino valorizzava la bivalenza, a volte la polivalenza, dei simboli. In questo senso Gregorio osserva che il significato del monte Libano “è diviso dalla Scrittura in due accezioni contrarie [...] e così è possibile vedere che gli stessi profeti impiegano il medesimo vocabolo secondo le due opposte accezioni, di lode o di biasimo”,¹⁴ e interpreta di conseguenza. In questo ambito va rilevata l'accezione negativa del significato simbolico del sole, abitualmente addotto in senso positivo. In Ct 1.6 la sposa, dopo aver detto di essere nera e bella, osserva che il sole *παρέβλεφε* *μὲν*. Gregorio collega questo passo con la parabola evangelica del seminatore,¹⁵ osserva che l'anima significata dal seme caduto sulla pietra, in quanto non ha messo radici in profondità, non resiste alla tentazione, significata dall'arsura del sole, e per supportarne questa interpretazione negativa, che – egli stesso ammette – potrebbe stupire i suoi ascoltatori, adduce altri passi scritturistici

8 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 327–329).

9 Pr 9.1.

10 Ex 37.4 ss.

11 1Cor 3.11.

12 Mt 22.40.

13 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 415–418).

14 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 422).

15 Mt 13.3 ss.

nei quali il calore del sole ha significato negativo.¹⁶ Un'applicazione addirittura virtuosistica di questo procedimento esegetico leggiamo, a proposito del significato simbolico del sonno, nel passaggio dalla fine della decima omelia all'inizio dell'undicesima. In Ct 5.2 la sposa invita gli amici a mangiare e bere, e conclude "io dormo ma il mio cuore è desto". Gregorio interpreta il banchetto come simbolo del nutrimento spirituale, lo collega col sonno tramite il tema filoniano, a lui caro, della sobria ebbrezza,¹⁷ e osserva che il sonno durante il quale la donna dice di esser desta, significa l'assopimento dei sensi corporei che permette all'anima di svolgere senza impedimenti la sua attività spirituale.¹⁸ Terminata così l'omelia, quando dà inizio alla successiva, Gregorio propone nel proemio il solito tema dell'esigenza, per l'anima, di scuotere via da sé ogni scoria di materialità per tendere alle realtà superiori, e osserva che devono essere "più forti del sonno coloro che guardano la vita che è in alto", e si dilunga sulla sonnolenza ingannatrice, che significa l'inganno della vita, attratta dai fantasmi del potere, della ricchezza, del godimento.¹⁹ Nulla nel passo del *Cantico*²⁰ che Gregorio si accinge a interpretare richiama il tema del sonno, che perciò, stante l'interpretazione accentuatamente negativa, sembra introdotto di proposito in contrapposizione all'accezione positiva con cui il medesimo simbolo era stato interpretato in immediata precedenza.

Procedimenti dell'esegesi alessandrina particolarmente invisibili agli antiocheni erano quelli fondati sull'interpretazione allegorica dei numeri e dell'etimologia dei nomi ebraici. Anch'essi sono presenti nell'interpretazione gregoriana del *Cantico*,²¹ e se le occorrenze di esegesi aritmo-logica sono ben poche perché i numeri non abbondano nel *Cantico*, meritano per altro di essere adeguatamente rilevate a motivo della loro complessità. In Ct 3.7 sessanta guerrieri stanno intorno al letto di Salomone. Gregorio scompone 60 in 12×5 ; 12 ricorda le 12 verghe fatte prendere da Mosè, una per ogni tribù, in Num 17.17, di cui una sola germoglia, e le 12 pietre che Giosuè fa collocare nel letto del Giordano dopo che Israele l'aveva miracolosamente attraversato;²² le une e le altre indicano il progresso del popolo verso la perfezione; il numero 5 significa cinque guerrieri per ciascuna tribù. Dato che Israele etimologicamente significa vedere Dio, il

16 Sono Ps 120.6 e Is 66.20 (pp. 51–52).

17 *Cant X* (GNO VI 310).

18 *Cant X* (GNO VI 311–314).

19 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 315–317).

20 Ct 5.2–3.

21 Per le esegesi etimologiche cf. *Cant VI* (GNO VI 196) Israele = vedere Dio; *Cant VII* (GNO VI 217) Samuele = colui che guarda.

22 Gs 4.2 ss.

tutto sta a significare che non si deve volgere lo sguardo al peccato con nessuno dei cinque sensi e che solo i puri di cuore vedranno Dio.²³ Alle prese poi con le sessanta regine e le ottanta concubine di Salomone,²⁴ pressato da una parte dalla superiore dignità delle regine rispetto alle concubine e dall'altra dalla concorde tradizione cristiana che esaltava il numero otto come numero perfetto in quanto indicativo del riposo escatologico,²⁵ mentre il sei, per lo più collegato con i sei giorni della creazione, aveva significato ambiguo, inferiore non solo all'otto ma anche al sette, Gregorio è stato costretto ad autentiche acrobazie esegetiche, che comunque si sforza di giustificare.²⁶ Per valorizzare il negletto numero sei, fa ricorso al Gesù affamato assetato nudo infermo pellegrino carcerato di Mt 25.35–36, donde ricava sei precetti la cui osservanza, decuplicata come i talenti guadagnati dal servo di Lk 19.16, dà adito al regno dei cieli.²⁷ Per deprimere poi il significato del numero otto, si rifà alla rubrica *per l'Ottava* che correda il Ps 6, le cui parole “sono esplicite e tipiche di quelli che sono flagellati e che, per paura di quello che si aspettano, piegano verso di sé l'ascolto dell'altrui misericordia”; moltiplicate per dieci esse diventano segno di quanti compiono il bene, ma per timore e non per amore, come invece quelli significati dalle regine.²⁸ Un autentico *tour de force*.

Altro procedimento esegetico tipicamente alessandrino era quello che definisco del *defectus litterae*, per cui, in presenza di una grave incongruenza, o presunta tale, del testo biblico, si negava che esso potesse essere inteso alla lettera e si passava senz'altro al significato allegorico. In questo senso il contenuto del *Cantico* rappresentava un caso a sé, in quanto se ne poteva ricavare un significato religioso soltanto a condizione di spiritualizzarlo, che è dire allegorizzarlo completamente, negando ogni valore al suo significato letterale. Ciò nonostante Gregorio non ha rinunciato a fare uso sporadicamente anche di questo procedimento esegetico, per chiarire qualche dettaglio. A proposito del letto di Salomone,²⁹ egli si chiede in qual modo esso potrebbe essere abbellito da sessanta guerrieri che lo circondano, per cui la spiegazione non deve fermarsi alla lettera (τῷ γράμματι)³⁰ ma innalzarsi all'interpretazione spirituale.

23 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 193–197).

24 Ct 6.8.

25 Cf. J. Daniélou, *Bibbia e liturgia*, Milano 1958, 353 ss.

26 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 465–466).

27 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 462–463).

28 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 464–465).

29 Ct 3.7.

30 Per adeguamento a 2 Cor 3.6 (la lettera uccide, lo spirito dà la vita), *gramma* indica il significato letterale del testo biblico in senso negativo, come già in Origene.

Siccome i guerrieri fanno paura in guerra, essi qui stanno a significare che la bellezza di Dio provoca spavento, in quanto la sua attrattiva proviene “da quegli oggetti che sono l’opposto della bellezza corporea”.³¹ Riguardo ai profumi della sposa descritti analiticamente in Ct 4.13–14 Gregorio si chiede: “come l’effluvio della sposa è un bosco di melograni? E come dai melograni si producono i frutti degli alberi fruttiferi? E come è possibile che gli alberi fruttiferi costituiscano una serie di profumi e di unguenti?”, e altro ancora,³² e propone una spiegazione che, in modo del tutto generico, considera questi dettagli aromatici come momenti dell’ascesa dell’anima verso la perfezione: essa è tale da fare della bocca della sposa “una sorgente di miele e della sua lingua una dispensa di mescolata sapienza, nella quale si può intendere spiritualmente la terra promessa che stilla latte e miele”.³³

III

Ritengo che quanto abbiamo fin qui esposto dimostri *ad abundantiam* la pertinenza dell’interpretazione gregoriana del *Cantico* all’ambito dell’esegesi alessandrina, sì che adesso ci chiediamo quale sia, in questo ambito, il *proprium* di tale interpretazione, che ne fa una *performance* tanto originale rispetto al modello origeniano. In questa nuova prospettiva osserviamo innanzitutto che Gregorio ha operato, rispetto a quel modello, una semplificazione radicale. Per renderci conto di questo, il raffronto con la traduzione latina di Rufino, oltretutto troppo largamente incompleta, è insufficiente, per non dire fuorviante, in quanto Rufino non soltanto ha tradotto con la massima libertà ma ha eliminato non poco dell’originale, sopprimendone non soltanto la dimensione filologica, che riteniamo non essere stata di poco conto, ma soprattutto il sistematico ricorso che, come attesta esplicitamente Girolamo,³⁴ Origene aveva fatto alle traduzioni di Aquila Simmaco Teodoziona e alla cosiddetta Quinta, per arricchire con le loro varianti, rispetto al testo dei LXX, la sua interpretazione del *Cantico*. Alla pari di Rufino, anche Gregorio ha trascurato completamente queste altre traduzioni, limitandosi al testo dei LXX, integrato da poche osservazioni riguardanti dettagli del testo ebraico, per le quali è ricorso alla compe-

31 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 190–191). Qui e di seguito i passi riportati in italiano sono adottati secondo la traduzione di C. Moreschini (ed.), *Omellerie sul Cantico dei cantici*, Roma 1988.

32 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 278).

33 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 280).

34 Si veda la lettera dedicatoria indirizzata a papa Damaso, preposta da Girolamo alla sua traduzione delle due omellerie di Origene sul *Cantico dei cantici* (GCS 33).

tenza di esperti di tale lingua.³⁵ Oltre a questo, di filologico, nel testo gregoriano, c'è pochissimo d'altro: una proposta di interpunzione;³⁶ un caso di ricorso a un altro, non meglio qualificato, esemplare;³⁷ la proposta, per altro non accettabile, di interrompere la sequenza di Ct 6.4–7, in cui lo sposo esalta le bellezze della sposa, riportando alla sposa l'inizio del v. 5 “Distogli i tuoi occhi da me perché essi mi hanno dato le ali”.³⁸

Ma la più significativa presa di distanza di Gregorio da Origene è proprio là dove egli più dipende da lui. Da lui infatti egli ha dedotto l'interpretazione della sposa come simbolo dell'anima, in aggiunta all'interpretazione, già tradizionale, della donna come simbolo della chiesa: ma mentre Origene aveva tenuto sistematicamente distinte le due interpretazioni, interpretando lo sposo come il Logos in riferimento all'anima e come Cristo in riferimento alla chiesa, Gregorio ha, per così dire, fuso insieme le due interpretazioni, sì che la sposa ora è l'anima ora è la chiesa, e le definizioni di Cristo e Logos si alternano senza precisa distinzione. Di questa fondamentale discrasia rispetto al modello tratteremo alla fine di questa relazione, e qui ci limitiamo ad aggiungere che, nell'ambito dei personaggi minori, mentre gli amici dello sposo significano sistematicamente gli angeli, le figlie di Gerusalemme a volte sono identificate con le fanciulle amiche della sposa,³⁹ ma altre volte ne sono distinte, in quanto figlie della Gerusalemme celeste,⁴⁰ una valutazione positiva in pieno contrasto con quella di Origene.⁴¹

Ma se Gregorio ha semplificato la sua interpretazione rispetto a quella di Origene, per suo conto l'ha complicata non di poco a motivo dell'applicazione

35 Cf. *Cant* v; XIV (GNO VI 143; 410). Solo come una curiosità riportiamo quest'affermazione apodittica di Gregorio (*Cant* II [GNO VI 53–54]). “La configurazione della nostra lingua [...] mal si accorda con l'elegante struttura dell'ebraico” (*sic*). Per esperti di questioni, per così dire, scientifiche, cf. *Cant* III; IV (GNO VI 94; 105).

36 *Cant* VIII (GNO VI 259).

37 *Cant* II (GNO VI 67).

38 *Cant* XV (GNO VI 446–447). Nella spiegazione che segue Gregorio dimostra che allegoricamente si può parlare di ali sia di Dio sia dell'uomo, “perché questo termine di ali significa la potenza e la beatitudine e l'incorruttibilità e siffatte qualità. Poiché dunque tali qualità le possedette anche l'uomo finché fu in tutto simile a Dio, mentre successivamente l'inclinare al male ci spogliò del possesso di quelle ali [...], per questo motivo fu rivelata la grazia di Dio che ci illuminò, affinché, deposta l'empietà e i desideri del mondo, di nuovo noi mettessimo le ali per mezzo della santità e della giustizia”. Mi pare evidente che qui Gregorio sia stato influenzato dalla notissima immagine platonica dell'anima che perde le ali (Plato, *Phaedrus* 246c).

39 *Cant* VII; XIII (GNO VI 211–212; 372–374).

40 *Cant* IV; VII (GNO VI 129; 207).

41 Origene aveva interpretato le figlie di Gerusalemme come le figlie della Gerusalemme terrena, nemica della chiesa (II 1, 3–7; Baehrens 114).

dei ben noti criteri dello *skopòs* e dell'*akolouthia*⁴². Rispetto al modello del commentario filoniano e origeniano, caratterizzato dall'immediata aderenza anche dell'interpretazione allegorica al testo del lemma biblico in oggetto, senza ricerca sistematica del collegamento delle interpretazioni dei singoli lemmi una con l'altra, Gregorio ha mirato a un'esegesi più unitaria e compatta, assegnandole un fine specifico che non fosse soltanto quello di realizzare una serie di interpretazioni slegate una dall'altra, e interpretando in funzione di questa finalità i dettagli del testo, in modo da collegare, per quanto possibile, una con l'altra le interpretazioni dei singoli lemmi.⁴³ Lo *skopòs* assegnato da Gregorio all'interpretazione del *Cantico*, come anche a quella della coeva *Vita di Mosè*, è la descrizione dell'itinerario spirituale per cui l'anima, purificatasi dal peccato, s'innalza gradatamente, mediante la pratica delle virtù cristiane, a un contatto sempre più intimo con Dio, in un progresso che, stante l'infinità di Dio, è anch'esso senza fine. Favoriva Gregorio in questo senso la menzione, quasi all'inizio del *Cantico*,⁴⁴ della nerezza della sposa, agevolmente interpretabile, come avevano già fatto Ippolito e Origene, quale simbolo del peccato da cui l'anima si purifica,⁴⁵ dando così inizio all'ascesa. Ma in complesso il *Cantico* si presenta come un dialogo d'amore tra i due protagonisti, che esaltano uno le bellezze dell'altro, senza alcun ordine, anzi con varie ripetizioni, e soprattutto senza che l'andamento della narrazione dia a vedere un evidente progressivo accrescimento di quell'amore. In questo senso il fondamentale tema dell'ascesa appare imposto dall'esterno all'interpretazione del *Cantico*, sì che Gregorio ha avuto il suo da fare per adeguarla in dettaglio a quello *skopòs* che è loro estraneo.⁴⁶

Oltre il continuo insistere sull'esigenza di collegare organicamente fra loro le interpretazioni dei singoli lemmi,⁴⁷ il principale procedimento mediante il quale Gregorio ha cercato di superare la difficoltà è quello che definiamo dei

42 Per un minimo di esemplificazione pertinente all'interpretazione del *Cantico*, cf. GNO VI 45; 53; 109; 150; 347; 379.

43 Tale collegamento Gregorio ribadisce continuamente, nel corso dell'interpretazione del *Cantico*: mi limito a ricordare i suoi interventi in proposito a GNO VI 45; 140; 400; 434.

44 Ct 1.5.

45 *Cant* II (GNO VI 46).

46 Gregorio segnala molte volte la difficoltà che gli propone l'interpretazione del testo, ben al di là della tapinosi tradizionale: cf. GNO VI 140; 193; 278; 294; 393; 457. A volte propone due interpretazioni per il medesimo testo del *Cantico*: cf., p. es., GNO VI 114; 218; 339; 369. A *Cant* V (GNO VI 135) si legge un auspicio di gusto tipicamente origeniano. "Certo, se si trovasse un altro ragionamento che più si avvicinasse alla verità dei problemi sottoposti alla nostra indagine, noi accetteremmo di buon grado tale grazia".

47 Cf. nota 16 e contesto.

sommari, nel senso che egli più volte interrompe la spiegazione dettagliata del testo per mettere in evidenza come, proprio grazie ai dati ricavati da quelle spiegazioni, l'anima dia corso alla progressiva ascesa verso la perfezione. Il primo sommario è nella quarta omelia. Prima di interpretare Ct 2.2 "Come il giglio tra i cardì, così è la mia sorella tra le fanciulle" Gregorio esclama: "Quanto è grande il progresso dell'anima nel suo salire verso la cima!", e continua: "La prima ascesa è l'essere stata fatta uguale alla cavalla distruttrice della potenza egiziana. La seconda ascesa è l'essere diventata amica e l'essere fatta occhi di colomba. La terza ascesa è il non essere chiamata più amica, ma ormai sorella del Signore".⁴⁸ I successivi sommari si susseguono con una certa regolarità nelle omelie v,⁴⁹ vi,⁵⁰ ix,⁵¹ xi,⁵² xii.⁵³ All'inizio di questo ultimo sommario Gregorio sintetizza al meglio il tema dell'ascesa senza fine:

L'anima che guarda verso Dio e concepisce quel buon desiderio della bellezza immortale, possiede entro di sé il desiderio della realtà superna che è sempre nuovo, e non ottunde mai la sua brama con la sazietà. Per questo motivo essa non cessa mai di protendersi in avanti, non cessa di abbandonare quella condizione in cui si trova, e di penetrare sempre più all'interno, in quella realtà in cui non è ancora stata, e quello che per lei in ogni momento appare mirabile e grande, essa lo considera più basso di quello che raggiunge successivamente, in quanto quello che di volta in volta trova è sicuramente più bello di quello che in precedenza ha affermato.⁵⁴

È indubbio che l'insistenza di Gregorio nel proporre il tema dell'ascesa assicuri all'andamento della sua interpretazione una compattezza che non ravvisiamo in quella di Origene. Ma, ripetiamo, è un tema imposto dall'esterno al contenuto del *Cantico*, sì che a volte Gregorio si trova in difficoltà. La difficoltà maggiore gliel'hanno proposta le parole della sposa in cerca dello sposo: "Mi trovarono le guardie che vanno intorno per la città. Mi percossero, mi ferirono, mi tolsero il velo i guardiani delle mura". Siamo, con la dodicesima omelia, a Ct 6.7, cioè quando, secondo lo schema gregoriano, l'ascesa dell'anima si è spinta

48 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 115).

49 *Cant V* (GNO VI 158–159).

50 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 175–179).

51 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 280–281).

52 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 323–324).

53 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 366–367).

54 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 366–367).

ormai molto in alto, troppo rispetto al significato letterale del passo. Gregorio riconosce la difficoltà⁵⁵ ma non può non cercare di superarla. Si chiede: dato che la sposa si è già tolta la tunica,⁵⁶ come mai ora è in possesso del velo? La tunica significa la materialità, e ora la perdita del velo significa un'ulteriore purificazione, "in modo che l'occhio, liberato da ogni copertura, possa tendere la vista senza impedimenti verso la bellezza desiderata". Quindi, continua Gregorio con evidente *petitio principii*, se è cosa buona togliere il velo, "saranno senza dubbio buona cosa anche la percossa e la ferita", e per supportare questa sconcertante affermazione adduce vari passi dell'AT in cui il percuotere con la verga è apprezzato positivamente,⁵⁷ sì che può concludere: "se questi sono i risultati di quella dolce percossa [...] allora è buona cosa essere percossi dalla verga, perché da tale percossa derivano in gran copia tanti beni".⁵⁸ A questo punto non mi pare eccessivo concludere che l'aver costretto l'interpretazione del testo biblico in uno schema precostituito ha costretto Gregorio a forzare quelli che gli antiocheni consideravano gli arbitrii e gli eccessi dell'esegesi alesandrina anche al di là di quanto avevano fatto Filone e Origene.

IV

Se rammentiamo che in gioventù Gregorio era stato maestro di retorica, non ci stupisce ravvisare nella sua interpretazione del *Cantico* una dimensione didascalica che viene anche teorizzata.⁵⁹ Notiamo in questo senso la tendenza a brevi spiegazioni, chiose, addirittura parafrasi, che, a volte messe in bocca ai vari personaggi, sintetizzano un insegnamento più diffuso. Per un minimo di esemplificazione, nella nona omelia, nel contesto dell'interpretazione di Ct 4.11 "l'odore delle tue vesti è come il profumo dell'incenso", leggiamo: "[...] il concetto del simbolo è il seguente: l'indumento delle tue virtù, o sposa, imita la divina beatitudine, perché grazie alla purezza e all'impassibilità è fatto simile alla natura inaccessibile. Tale è dunque il profumo delle tue vesti, che

55 "Queste (parole) sembreranno forse a qualcuno parole di lamento piuttosto che di gioia" (*Cant XII* [GNO VI 359]).

56 Ct 5.3.

57 Oltre Pr 23.13-14 e Dt 32.39, Gregorio adduce pure Ps 22.4, dove la menzione del bastone del pastore non sembra avere alcuna finalità correttiva.

58 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 360-362).

59 "Essa (cioè la sposa) ci propone un principio didascalico che ci è familiare e di immediata comprensione", cioè cominciare dalle realtà corporee per gradualmente ascendere a quelle spirituali, *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 386).

corrisponde a quello dell'incenso riservato all'onore di Dio".⁶⁰ Con la stessa finalità, ma di segno opposto, è la tendenza alla spiegazione ampia, catechetica, su argomenti impegnativamente dottrinali, che s'infittiscono verso la fine del commentario: confronto tra la natura illimitata ed eterna di Dio e quella dell'uomo;⁶¹ le due nature, sensibile e intellettuale, dell'uomo;⁶² l'uomo nel paradiso terrestre;⁶³ Cristo e la Chiesa, suo corpo.⁶⁴ E qui va rilevato che, se Gregorio insiste soprattutto sul Cristo incarnato e la sua missione redentrice, egli è sempre attento a rilevare simmetricamente il suo essere autenticamente Dio. Basterà citare: "In Cristo una parte è increata e una parte è creata: e noi diciamo che il suo lato increato è il suo esistere eternamente e prima dei secoli, l'essere creatore di tutto quello che esiste, mentre il suo aspetto creato consiste nell'essersi conformato al corpo della nostra umiltà secondo l'economia eseguita per il nostro bene".⁶⁵

Accostando più da presso la tecnica esegetica di Gregorio nel concreto farsi dell'interpretazione del testo biblico volta per volta, rileviamo in primo luogo l'abilità nel ricavare la spiegazione allegorica da dettagli anche minimi del testo del *Cantico*. A proposito delle collane della sposa di Ct 1.10, egli osserva che qui, dove ci saremmo aspettati il singolare, "il plurale indica la perfezione racchiusa in ciascun genere di virtù".⁶⁶ Quanto alle potenze e la forza del campo di Ct 2.7, "l'unione dei due termini equivalenti ha di mira un accrescimento di significato", con riferimento, in questo caso, alla natura angelica.⁶⁷ Interpretando il melograno di Ct 4.13, Gregorio fonda l'allegoria sul fatto che esso "contiene e nutre il suo frutto per mezzo di un involucro amaro e aspro al gusto", ma quando è maturato "è piacevole a vedersi, dolce al gusto e privo di ogni asprezza [...] affinché, grazie a quanto viene detto, noi apprendiamo a non infiacchirci, in questa vita, nella rilassatezza e nel lusso, ma preferiamo la vita che è tutta racchiusa in sé ad opera della continenza".⁶⁸ Quanto al giglio di Ct 2.1, "lo stelo del giglio, poiché si è allungato verso l'alto per gran tratto dalla radice a mo' di calamo, produce dalla sua cima il fiore e si allontana non di poco dalla terra con tutta la sua altezza, sì che la bellezza del fiore – io penso – rimane intatta in alto, senza contaminarsi al contatto con la terra", per significare lo slancio dell'anima

60 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 272).

61 *Cant V; VI* (GNO VI 157–158; 179–180).

62 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 173–174).

63 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 347–349).

64 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 380–383).

65 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 380–381).

66 *Cant III* (GNO VI 81).

67 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 133).

68 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 282–283).

in ascesa verso l'alto.⁶⁹ Il cipresso, del cui legno sono fatti i soffitti della casa degli sposi,⁷⁰ “per sua natura ha buon profumo ed è anche inattaccabile dalla putredine ed è adatto a ogni lavorazione di falegnameria, una volta che sia stato reso liscio e armonioso”, il che c'insegna che, nell'educare l'anima alla pratica delle virtù, non dobbiamo neppure trascurare “il bell'ordine che appare agli occhi di tutti”.⁷¹ Nella descrizione delle bellezze della sposa di Ct 4.1 ss. il testo antepone la bellezza dei denti a quella delle labbra. Gregorio considera anormale quest'ordine, sì che “questo particolare merita di non essere passato senza accurato esame” e spiega: come con i denti trituriamo il nutrimento del corpo, così “c'è nell'anima una capacità di sminuzzare gl'insegnamenti, e grazie ad essa l'insegnamento diventa utile a chi lo riceve”. Perciò allegoricamente i denti sono i maestri che istruiscono l'anima, e la loro lode precede quella delle labbra, perché “le labbra non potrebbero fiorire di una bellezza razionale, se quei denti, attraverso un esame laborioso delle discipline, non ponessero sulle labbra la grazia che è nei ragionamenti”.⁷²

Quest'ultima spiegazione è senza dubbio molto sofisticata, ma anche le precedenti appaiono tutt'altro che semplici e ovvie. In effetti ravvisiamo un altro tratto distintivo della tecnica esegetica del Nisseno in un'evidente propensione alla spiegazione complicata, comunque tale da far colpo sull'ascoltatore e il lettore. Ad esempio, quanto alla strana assimilazione delle mascelle dello sposo alle fiale di profumo,⁷³ Gregorio prima rileva la particolare forma dalla fiala, tale da non sembrare né del tutto concava né piatta, assunta a indicare la semplicità, che connessa con la capacità delle mascelle di frantumare il cibo, spiritualmente significa che nell'insegnamento della chiesa “non si osserva niente di fondo e di marcio, ma ogni cosa è luminosa e libera e indenne da ogni ingannevole inganno e profonda oscurità”.⁷⁴ Particolarmente complicata è l'interpretazione del collo della sposa.⁷⁵ Gregorio descrive lungamente il collo, la cui funzione è di sostenere la testa e attraverso il quale passano sia gli alimenti sia le parole. Dato che il capo del corpo della chiesa è Cristo, collo di questo corpo è colui che “grazie alla sua voce sonora si fa servo delle parole”, in modo da nutrire, col suo insegnamento, tutto il corpo della chiesa. A imitazione dell'armoniosa posizione delle vertebre del collo, costui, in mezzo al popolo,

69 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 114).

70 *Ct* 1.17.

71 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 112).

72 *Cant VII* (GNO VI 223–224).

73 *Ct* 5.13.

74 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 401–402).

75 *Ct* 4.4.

opera a pro della pace e favorisce l'unità. "Un tale collo era Paolo, e lo fu chiunque altro a sua imitazione visse una vita perfetta e portò il nome del Signore".⁷⁶ La menzione di Paolo qui è tutt'altro che occasionale, dato che la presenza dell'apostolo nel nostro commentario è addirittura pervasiva, in quanto, al di là delle innumerevoli citazioni di passi delle sue lettere, egli è continuamente presentato da Gregorio come prototipo del perfetto imitatore di Cristo. Lo affianca, in entità minore ma comunque ragguardevole, Mosè, come esempio dell'anima che ascende gradualmente fino all'unione con Dio.⁷⁷ L'invadente presenza di questi due personaggi, soprattutto di Paolo, lungo tutto il corso dell'interpretazione ne costituisce uno dei tratti più caratterizzanti.

V

Dato che Gregorio ha avvertito pressante l'esigenza di assicurare alla sua interpretazione la compattezza e la coerenza che non gli sfuggiva quanto fossero rimaste sostanzialmente estranee alle interpretazioni di Filone e di Origene, può stupire il rilevare nel suo commentario un'evidente tendenza a introdurre similitudini, allargate a volte fino a presentarsi come vere e proprie *ekphraseis*, in evidente controtendenza rispetto a quell'esigenza. Consideriamo però ancora una volta che Gregorio era ben versato nell'arte della retorica, sì che non gli sfuggiva che il continuo implacabile battere e ribattere della sua interpretazione sull'ascesa dell'anima a Dio tramite l'esercizio delle virtù poteva ingenerare fastidio e stanchezza nell'ascoltatore e nel lettore. Di qui l'opportunità di alleggerire l'andamento del discorso esegetico, oltre che col ricorso a interpretazioni desuete dei dettagli del testo, mediante l'inserzione di similitudini e descrizioni tali da distogliere e trasportare per un momento altrove l'attenzione di chi ascoltava o leggeva. Così, a proposito di Salomone Gregorio osserva che, come chi guarda un quadro al di là della varietà dei colori "vede soltanto la figura che l'artista ha fatto balzar fuori per mezzo dei colori", così in quello che la Scrittura dice di quel re, al di là dei dettagli, si

⁷⁶ *Cant VII* (GNO VI 233–235).

⁷⁷ Paolo è presente già nel prologo (GNO VI 5). Poi lo troviamo proprio all'inizio della prima omelia e ci accompagna sistematicamente fino alla quindicesima (GNO VI 14 e 443). Si veda, p. es: "Questo viene compiuto anche da Paolo, che è la sposa e che per mezzo della virtù imita lo sposo ed effigia in se stesso, per mezzo del suo profumo, la bellezza inaccessibile, ecc.", *Cant III* (GNO VI 91). Quanto a Mosè, cf.: "Chi non conosce infatti le famose ascese di Mosè, di quel personaggio che fu sempre più grande e non si fermò mai nel suo accrescimento del bene?", *Cant XII* (GNO VI 344), e segue la descrizione delle ascese di Mosè, quasi una sintesi della *Vita di Mosè*, che si prolunga per più di due pagine.

ammira il ritratto nel suo insieme.⁷⁸ Come nelle rappresentazioni teatrali uno stesso attore appare in più ruoli, mutando il suo aspetto mediante la diversità delle maschere che indossa, così colui che progredisce secondo le virtù non resta sempre nelle medesime caratteristiche, ma in relazione al continuo progredire cambia le sue fattezze spirituali grazie all'accrescimento del bene.⁷⁹ “Come nella preparazione dei tessuti, alla quale concorrono molti fili, alcuni sono tenuti tesi e diritti, altri invece sono separati in linee oblique, e comunque l'arte della tessitura produce il vestito, allo stesso modo anche nella vita secondo virtù devono concorrere molti elementi che servono a intessere la vita onesta”.⁸⁰ Potremmo continuare a lungo, ma ci limitiamo a rilevare ancora il molteplice uso, da parte di Gregorio, dell'immagine dello specchio, già cara a Plotino, in riferimento a vari aspetti della vita dell'uomo. L'anima perfetta per la pratica delle virtù riflette in sé, come in uno specchio, la perfezione del Logos.⁸¹ Come l'immagine nello specchio, l'uomo “si trasforma a seconda delle immagini volute dalla sua libera scelta”.⁸² “Come è possibile che vi sia una bella figura in uno specchio, se esso non riceve l'immagine di una bella forma?”⁸³ Come in uno specchio fatto a regola d'arte si riflette con esattezza la persona specchiata, così l'anima, che “abbia gettato via da sé ogni sozzura materiale, ha impresso in se stessa la pura impronta della bellezza immacolata”.⁸⁴ Quanto alle molteplici *ekphraeis*, ci limitiamo a segnalare la bella descrizione del risorgere della vita a primavera nella quinta omelia⁸⁵ e, nella nona, l'ampio spazio dedicato alle figlie di Giobbe.⁸⁶

VI

Alcune anomalie nell'andamento del commentario possono dare l'impressione che Gregorio nel corso della predicazione delle omelie abbia modificato per

⁷⁸ *Cant I* (GNO VI 28).

⁷⁹ *Cant VI* (GNO VI 185–186).

⁸⁰ *Cant IX* (GNO VI 271).

⁸¹ *Cant III* (GNO VI 90).

⁸² *Cant IV* (GNO VI 104). L'esercizio del libero arbitrio come *condicio sine qua non* della vita morale dell'uomo è fortemente rilevato da Gregorio. Cf., p. es., GNO VI 36; 55; 102; 156 (in connessione col tema della sobria ebbrezza); 241.

⁸³ *Cant V* (GNO VI 150).

⁸⁴ *Cant XV* (GNO VI 440).

⁸⁵ *Cant V* (GNO VI 146).

⁸⁶ *Cant IX* (GNO VI 288–289). Ricordiamo ancora: episodi della storia d'Israele (*Cant VI* [GNO VI 193–195]) e l'attività delle api (*Cant IX* [GNO VI 269–270]).

qualche verso l'impostazione esegetica iniziale.⁸⁷ In questo senso è evidente l'anomalia riguardante i proemi che, nelle singole omelie, precedono l'inizio della specifica interpretazione del lemma biblico, in quanto le omelie XIII e XIV ne sono prive. Per renderci conto del significato dell'anomalia, osserviamo che, mentre nelle precedenti omelie sull'*Ecclesiaste* erano state corredate di proemio solo poche omelie e senza preciso ordine,⁸⁸ nelle omelie sul *Cantico* la presenza dei proemi è ben più pervasiva e comincia già con la prima omelia. In effetti Gregorio, che nel prologo polemizza con i letteralisti senza diretto collegamento col contenuto del *Cantico*, nella prima omelia, pur correlandola di un breve lemma,⁸⁹ tratta della problematica di carattere generale che Origene aveva esposto nel prologo, col risultato che questa introduzione si estende per la maggior parte dell'omelia, la quale soltanto verso la fine è dedicata all'interpretazione del lemma. Il proemio alla seconda omelia tratta in generale del contenuto e della bellezza del testo; quello della terza propone il tema dell'ascesa. I proemi delle omelie dalla quarta alla settima presentano considerazioni ricavate da qualche termine iniziale del relativo lemma;⁹⁰ quelli delle omelie IX e X introducono citazioni paoline che hanno attinenza quanto mai generica col contenuto dei relativi lemmi, e così dicasi del proemio alla undicesima omelia, impostato sul tema della sonnolenza spirituale.⁹¹ Il proemio della dodicesima omelia evoca un viaggio per mare, del tutto estraneo alle parole del lemma.⁹² Le omelie XIII e XIV sono prive di proemio. Quello della quindicesima e ultima omelia, richiamando la chiamata degli apostoli, solo in modo del tutto surrettizio si collega alle parole iniziali del lemma.⁹³ Dalla rapida carrellata si ricava questo consuntivo: il lunghissimo proemio della prima omelia è dedicato a trattare argomenti che avrebbero dovuto trovare

87 Quanto esponiamo in questo paragrafo consegue alla lettura delle omelie così come oggi le leggiamo e non ha alcuna attinenza con la dibattuta questione del rapporto tra l'originaria predicazione del ciclo di omelie in tempi molto ravvicinati e la successiva pubblicazione, cioè se e fino a che punto Gregorio abbia modificato, nella stesura definitiva, il testo predicato e trascritto dai tachigrafi. Personalmente ritengo che la rielaborazione del testo predicato sia stata in complesso rilevante. Cf. per esauriente trattazione, F. Dünzl, *Braut und Brautigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993, 17 ss.

88 Su otto omelie della raccolta, il proemio è premesso alle omelie III, V, VI.

89 Ct 1.1–4.

90 Ad esempio, il proemio della quarta omelia, prendendo lo spunto da “Quanto sei bella” di Ct 1.15, tratta della bellezza spirituale (GNO VI 100–101); il proemio della sesta omelia, in relazione a “Io cercai e non lo trovai” di Ct 3.1, introduce il tema della ricerca senza fine di Dio (GNO VI 172–174).

91 Di cui abbiamo già trattato: cf. sopra, p. 140.

92 Cant XII (GNO VI 341–342).

93 Cant XV (GNO VI 431–434).

collocazione più pertinente nel prologo; Gregorio ritiene utile sfruttare, nelle successive omelie, questa sua innovazione rispetto al modello origeniano, già valorizzata in precedenza solo sporadicamente, in modo più sistematico al fine di contribuire alla compattezza e organicità dell'interpretazione del testo del *Cantico*: ma cammin facendo questa esigenza viene da lui avvertita in modo sempre meno pressante, la connessione del proemio col lemma da interpretare nell'omelia diventa sempre meno pertinente fino a scomparire del tutto, donde la soppressione del proemio nelle omelie XIII e XIV. Il proemio preposto all'ultima omelia ha tutto l'aspetto di essere stato introdotto soltanto perché richiesto dalla struttura del commentario, in parallelo col proemio della prima omelia.

Ben più importante della problematica relativa ai proemi del commentario è quella pertinente al rapporto tra l'anima e la chiesa, ambedue identificate da Gregorio con la sposa, sulla traccia di Origene ma senza curarsi di tenere sistematicamente distinte una dall'altra le due interpretazioni. Nella prima omelia la sposa è identificata con l'anima,⁹⁴ e solo alla fine Gregorio introduce brevemente la chiesa, per altro non identificandola esplicitamente con la sposa, e la presenza della chiesa nelle omelie II e III resta del tutto occasionale.⁹⁵ Nella quarta omelia si parla due volte dell'unione di Cristo con la chiesa,⁹⁶ ma nel sommario che sintetizza i primi progressi nell'ascesa, è soltanto l'anima che ascende.⁹⁷ Nella quinta omelia, a commento di Ct 2.9,⁹⁸ prima è l'anima che viene illuminata dalla legge e dai profeti,⁹⁹ ma subito dopo è la chiesa che ascolta le parole del Logos;¹⁰⁰ poco dopo ancora¹⁰¹ la sposa è di nuovo l'anima: ormai la sposa è simbolo, oltre che dell'anima, anche della chiesa. Nelle omelie successive le due simbologie si alternano senza alcun ordine apparente: nella sesta omelia la chiesa è quasi assente, mentre nella settima è quasi assente l'anima e invece è molto presente la chiesa.¹⁰² Nell'ottava omelia prima tiene la scena l'anima,¹⁰³ ma poi, tramite la citazione paolina di Eph 3.10–12, Gregorio introduce come sposa la chiesa.¹⁰⁴ Nella nona omelia la chiesa è assente;

94 *Cant I* (GNO VI 36; 38).

95 *Cant II; III* (GNO VI 52; 93).

96 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 108; 122).

97 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 115).

98 "[...] guardando attraverso le finestre, sporgendosi attraverso le inferriate".

99 *Cant V* (GNO VI 145).

100 *Cant V* (GNO VI 145; 148).

101 *Cant V* (GNO VI 158).

102 *Cant VII* (GNO VI 210 ss.).

103 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 249; 253).

104 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 254 ss.).

nella decima è identificata col giardino dello sposo;¹⁰⁵ in un medesimo contesto dell'omelia XI¹⁰⁶ sono presentate come sposa del Logos prima la chiesa e poi l'anima; nella dodicesima, a fronte di una forte presenza dell'anima in figura della sposa, la presenza della chiesa è quanto mai marginale e generica.¹⁰⁷ Nella tredicesima omelia la sposa è l'anima, ma la chiesa è ben presente come corpo di Cristo in una catechesi ampia e di forte impegno,¹⁰⁸ nella quale non manca neppure il topico rimprovero a carico dei chierici indegni,¹⁰⁹ e anche nella XIV si parla lungamente del rapporto di Cristo con la chiesa, tramite il solito Paolo.¹¹⁰ All'inizio dell'ultima omelia la sposa è l'anima,¹¹¹ ma poi in questa veste viene presentata la chiesa.¹¹² Notiamo per altro che in tutti i sommari la protagonista dell'ascesa è sempre e solo l'anima.¹¹³ Dal complesso di questi dati sembra ricavarsi che, quando Gregorio, nel dare inizio al commentario, elimina la sistematica distinzione che Origene aveva introdotto tra l'anima e la chiesa ambedue significate dalla sposa, il suo interesse, in quanto concentrato primariamente sul tema dell'ascesa, privilegia l'anima come referente della sposa, relegando in posizione marginale la chiesa. Ma in corso d'opera egli ha avvertito l'esigenza di dilatare il ruolo della chiesa, identificandola più volte con la sposa, e soprattutto verso la fine del commentario le ha dedicato largo spazio. L'interferenza, man mano più accentuata, tra le due simbologie non ha certo giovato alla chiarezza dell'insieme, ma protagonista dell'ascesa lungo tutto il corso dell'interpretazione è rimasta sempre e soltanto l'anima, assicurandone così la fondamentale coerenza.

Bibliografia

- Cahill, J.B. "The date and setting of Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*", *JThS* 32 (1981) 447-460.
 Daniélou, J. *Bibbia e liturgia*, Milano 1958.
 Dünzl, F. *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993.

105 Ct 4.16.

106 Cant XI (GNO VI 318; 319).

107 Cant XII (GNO VI 341; 345).

108 Cant XIII (GNO VI 382-386).

109 Cant XIII (GNO VI 398).

110 Cant XIV (GNO VI 415-420).

111 Cant XV (GNO VI 434; 439; 443).

112 Cant XV (GNO VI 451-454).

113 Cant XI; XII (GNO VI 319; 321; 366).

Moreschini, C. (ed.). *Omellerie sul Cantico dei cantici*, Roma 1988.

Simonetti, M. *Lettera e/o allegoria. Un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica*, Roma 1985;

Simonetti, M. *Origene esegeta e la sua tradizione*, Brescia 2004.

The Exegesis of the *Song of Songs*: a New Type of Metaphysics

Theo Kobusch

I Gregory's Critique of Traditional Metaphysics

The Exegesis of the old-testament *Song of Songs* is of great importance for the development of Western metaphysics. This was not always clear at first glance for modern thought, since the explanation of Biblical texts was taken to be a type of theology, not a type of philosophy. The Church Fathers, however, and indeed that great spiritual *continuum* that reigned until the 12th century, did not distinguish between the philosophy of natural reason and the theology of revelation. So too Gregory of Nyssa, who composed the most philosophically rich commentary of the *Song of Songs*, consistently designated the Christian doctrine as “philosophy”, and never as a distinct theology. In his prologue, Gregory gave a clear indication of what the *Song of Songs*, and therefore also his commentary, should be taken to be.

The *Song of Songs* is the last of the Solomonian books, which also includes the book *Proverbs*, or the *Sayings*, and the book *Kohelet*, or *Ecclesiastes*. It is of decisive importance to note that these three books, *Proverbia*, *Ecclesiastes* and the *Canticum Canticorum* were taken to represent a tri-partite philosophy in the sense of the Stoics: ethics, physics, and logic. In the place of the latter, Christian philosophy substituted “theologic”, that is, philosophical theology or metaphysics. It was Origen who first took up this disciplinary division within Christian philosophy. In the prologue to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, he sketched out a theory of knowledge of the “true philosophy”, that is, the Christian philosophy, which would be of fundamental significance, and would be accepted up to the Middle Ages and beyond.¹ Accordingly, Solomon was the first to teach humanity the “divine philosophy” in this sense, insofar as he placed the book of *Proverbs* at the beginning so that the reader might begin with moral progress. Thus the reader would be prepared to enter into the discipline of natural philosophy in the book *Ecclesiastes*, through which he would learn of the ground and nature of sensible things, and also of defectiveness and

1 On the reception history of Origen's division of the Biblical texts according to philosophical disciplines, cf. T. Kobusch, *Christliche Philosophie. Die Entdeckung der Subjektivität*, Darmstadt 2006, 58–63.

fragility of the same. That is, the reader would learn to recognize the vanity of the world, and would in this sense be led to despise it. In this way the soul would most readily be enabled to ascend “to the mystical objects and to contemplate the divine in pure and spiritual love”, those topics that make up the content of the *Song of Songs*.²

In the course of the further development of the history of philosophy, other texts from the Old and New Testaments would also be organized according to this tri-partite division of philosophy into ethics, physics and metaphysics or theology. So, the book *Deuteronomy* belongs to ethics, *Genesis* to physics, whereas the *Gospel of John* provides the New Testament metaphysics of Christian philosophy. We find such epistemological expositions, which view the Bible itself as a philosophical text, not only in the Greek Church Fathers, but also in Ambrose, Hieronymus, Cassiodorus, Isidore of Seville and the Carolingian authors. These authors passed on this philosophical portrayal of the Bible into the 12th century, and through Meister Eckhart, Peter John Olivi and others into the modern era.³ The hermeneutic principle behind all of these exegetical efforts is most precisely and concisely formulated by Gregory of Nyssa: First, one must have a philosophical thought, to which the divinely inspired words of the scripture may be adapted, not the other way around; or, in a slogan and in my own words: first think, and then adapt Scripture!⁴

Gregory of Nyssa too adheres to Origen's doctrine. He openly took the book *Proverbs* to be an ethical treatise on the virtues and the book *Kohelet* to be a text on natural philosophy, in that the perishability and the transience of the visible cosmos—its “nullity”—is the central theme.⁵

2 Origen, *Commentarium In Canticum*, prol. 3, 1–23 (SC 375, 128–142); *ibidem* (SC 375, 138): *mystica*; also for Gregory of Nyssa, *Cant I* (GNO VI 22; 324; 387), the *Song of Songs* and thereby also Christian Metaphysics is a form of mystagogy.

3 Cf. T. Kobusch, “Das Johannesevangelium: Metaphysik der christlichen Philosophie. Von Origenes bis J.G. Fichte”, *RTPM* 81/2 (2014) 213–235.

4 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 173,3–5): (χρή γάρ οἶμαι προεκθέσθαι πρότερον τὴν τοῖς ῥητοῖς ἐγκειμένην διάνοιαν, εἰθ' οὕτως ἐφαρμόσαι τοῖς προθεωρηθεῖσι τὰ θεόπνευστα ῥήματα); cf. *Cant VI* (GNO VI 183,16–184,2): Καίρως δ' ἂν εἴη πάλιν ἐπ' αὐτῆς τῆς λέξεως παραθέσθαι τὰς θείας φωνάς, ὥστε τοῖς θεωρηθεῖσιν ἐφαρμοσθῆναι τὰ ῥήματα· Ἐπὶ κοίτην μου ἐν νυξὶν ἐζήτησα ὃν ἠγάπησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου, ἐζήτησα αὐτὸν καὶ οὐχ εὗρον αὐτόν, ἐκάλεσα αὐτόν καὶ οὐχ ὑπήκουσέ μου. ἀναστήσομαι δὴ καὶ κυκλώσω ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς πλατείαις καὶ ζητήσω ὃν ἠγάπησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου.

5 *Cant I* (GNO VI 22,7–12): [...] τότε προστίθησι τὴν ἐν τῷ Ἐκκλησιαστῇ φιλοσοφίαν τῷ ἱκανῶς διὰ τῆς παροιμιώδους ἀγωγῆς εἰσηγμένῳ εἰς τὴν τῶν ἀρετῶν ἐπιθυμίαν. καὶ διαβαλὼν ἐν τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ τὴν περὶ τὰ φαινόμενα τῶν ἀνθρώπων σχέσιν καὶ μάταιον εἶπὼν εἶναι πᾶν τὸ ἄστατον τε καὶ παρερχόμενον, [...]; cf. *Cant I* (GNO VI 22,13–17): [...] ὑπερτίθησι παντὸς τοῦ δι' αἰσθήσεως καταλαμβανομένου τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἡμῶν κίνησιν ἐπὶ τὸ ἀόρατον κάλλος καὶ οὕτως ἐκκαθάρας τὴν καρδίαν τῆς τὸ ἀόρατον κάλλος καὶ οὕτως ἐκκαθάρας τὴν καρδίαν τῆς περὶ τὰ φαινόμενα σχέσεως τότε διὰ

Finally, the *Song of Songs* also embodies for Gregory the metaphysics of Christian philosophy. He calls it the “mystical theory” or the “philosophy of the divine” or also the “mystagogy”.⁶ At other points in his work, this highest form of philosophy is also called *epopteia*, which Clemens of Alexandria had already identified with Aristotelian metaphysics.⁷ The concept of the “mystical”, which Origen had already used to characterize the content of the *Song of Songs*, is in the late antiquity just another word for metaphysics. This comes out unambiguously in the works of Ambrose. Ambrose wrote no actual commentary on the *Song of Songs*. However, in the medieval period William of St-Thierry compiled a collection of all of the passages from Ambrose related to the *Song of Songs*.⁸ Ambrose adopted Origen’s doctrine of the sciences from the prologue

τοῦ Ἀϊματος τῶν Ἀισμάτων ἐν τῶν θείων ἀδύτων μυσταγωγεί τὴν διάνοιαν. On the medieval reception of such an interpretation of the different books of the Bible according to philosophical disciplines, cf. T. Kobusch, *Die Philosophie des Hoch- und Spätmittelalters* (Geschichte der Philosophie, ed. W. Röd, Bd. v), München 2011, *sub voce* “Philosophie-Einteilung der Hl. Schrift”, 651.

- 6 *Cant* I (GNO VI 15,12): [...] ἀπτεσθαι τῆς ἐν τῷ Ἀϊσματι τῶν Ἀισμάτων μυστικῆς θεωρίας. *Cant* I (GNO VI 30,3): [...] πρὸς τὴν τῶν θείων φιλοσοφίαν [...].
- 7 Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata* I, 28, 176, (SC 30, 173): Ἡ μὲν οὖν κατὰ Μωυσέα φιλοσοφία τετραχῇ τέμνεται, εἷς τε τὸ ἱστορικὸν καὶ τὸ κυρίως λεγόμενον νομοθετικόν, ἅπερ ἂν εἴη τῆς ἡθικῆς πραγματείας ἴδια, τὸ τρίτον δὲ εἰς τὸ ἱερουργικόν, ὃ ἐστὶν ἥδη τῆς φυσικῆς θεωρίας· καὶ τέταρτον ἐπὶ πᾶσι τὸ θεολογικὸν εἶδος, ἡ ἐποπτεία, ἣν φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων τῶν μεγάλων ὄντων εἶναι μυστηρίων, Ἀριστοτέλης δὲ τὸ εἶδος τοῦτο μετὰ τὰ φυσικὰ καλεῖ. Cf. Ps-Basilius, *Enarratio in prophetam Isaiam* 5, 162,20–22 (PG 30 385): [...] τότε ἐπὶ τὰ τῆς φυσιολογίας ἀνώτερα προκόψας, τὰ καλούμενα παρὰ τισι μεταφυσικά, ἐποπτικὸς γενέσθαι δύναται. Cf. *Inscr* I 6 (GNO V 40,20–21): Ἀλλὰ μὴν ἰδίον ἐστὶ τῆς θεότητος ἡ ἐποπτικὴ τῶν ὄντων δύναμις τε καὶ ἐνέργεια. On the history of the concept of *epopteia*, see P. Hadot, “Epopteia”, in: J. Ritter et al. (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Bd. 2, Basel—Stuttgart 1972, 599 und T. Kobusch, “Metaphysik III”, in: J. Ritter et al. (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Bd. 5, Basel—Stuttgart 1980, 1196–1202. According to Gregory, *epopteia* is actually the way of seeing which is peculiar to God—cf. *Eun* II 585 (GNO I 397,8), *Eun* III/10 888 (GNO II 292,23), *Eust* (GNO III/1 14,6; 44,10; 49,5; 50,13), *Inscr* I 6 (GNO V 40,20). The Christian metaphysician, having in himself what he desired, becomes *epoptikos* and—to some extent—takes the way God actually sees all things: *Inscr* I 6 (GNO V 40,21–22): οὐκοῦν ὁ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἔχων ὅπερ ἐπόθησε, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐποπτικὸς γίνεται καὶ τὴν τῶν ὄντων διασκοπεῖται φύσιν. There are only a few passages (cf. *Inscr* I 6 [GNO V 41,15]; *An et res* [GNO III/3 39,12]) where *epoptikos* is used as a predicate of the eye of the human soul (cf. *Inscr* II 3 [GNO V 76,1]). Such an *epopteia* in the sense of metaphysics may be understood as that discipline which grasps the real essence of beings, even if not in an Aristotelian sense (cf. *infra*). Finally, Gregory also characterizes *epopteia* as the contemplating and discerning faculty of the soul, a *dynamis* that belongs to it “according to its nature” and through which it is the image of God (*An et res* [GNO III/3 39,12 ss.]).
- 8 Guillelmus de Sancto Theodorico, *Excerpta de libris beati Ambrosii super Canticum Cantico-rum* (van Burink, CCCM 8).

to the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* and it especially represents the basis for his text *De Isaac et anima*, which itself is practically a commentary on the *Song of Songs*.

Here, alongside the moral doctrine of the *Proverbs* and the natural doctrine of *Ecclesiastes*, the *Song of Songs* appears as the “mystical doctrine”, or indeed the doctrine of the “mystical”, according to which the soul transcends the earthly and gives itself over to the heavenly bridegroom.⁹ What the concept of the mystagogy concerns is also a designation for Neo-Platonic metaphysics. Proclus expressly calls his Neo-Platonic metaphysics a mystagogy.¹⁰

If we understand the *Song of Songs* according to the Church Fathers, and in particular according to Gregory of Nyssa, as metaphysics, this should not lead us to the misconception that we are here concerned with an abstract theory such as that of Aristotle. Rather, it is a question of a particular variety of metaphysics that is closely connected to human life, or indeed which represents a way of life.

Gregory expressly rejected the countless claims of Aristotelian theoretical metaphysics. Aristotle claimed that he could ground the essence of things and accordingly also the essence of the unmoved mover in metaphysical knowledge. Gregory called into question the sense and the possibility of such a secure, purely theoretical determination of essences, and indeed did so in the name of Christian philosophy. After all, the Patriarchs and the Prophets—so Gregory claims—were not in the least concerned with determining the essences of objects (such as, for example, heaven, earth, the sea, time, or eternity) in Aristotle’s sense. They had even consciously abandoned all determinations of theoretical metaphysics.¹¹ This type of metaphysics presupposes that the substantial essence of an appearing thing is theoretically knowable once its components have been dissolved and its qualities “despoiled” by abstracting reason. Gregory subjected just this type of metaphysics to a fundamental critique. With respect to the essence of a sensible body one may actually ask what is supposed to remain as its “essence” when colour, form, resistance, heaviness, size, location, movement and so on have been abstracted.

Metaphysical knowledge of the essence of the things is thereby impossible. It is, moreover, both unnecessary and superfluous. True knowledge of the things, for example, of the elements, is rather the orientation in the life-world

9 Ambrosius, *De Isaac et anima* 4, 22–30 (CSEL 32/1 657–661). Cf. also Id., *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam*, prol. 2 (SC 45bis 40–41).

10 Cf. T. Kobusch, “Epoitie—Metaphysik des inneren Menschen”, *Quaestio* 5 (2005) 23–36, here: 27.

11 *Eun* 11 103 (GNO I 256,24 ff.).

that the thing discloses in its utility for the sake of life. Of the determination of essences, on the other hand, Gregory says, we have “neither come to know them, nor do we suffer any harm if we do not know them”.¹² A trace of this critique of the Aristotelian idea of metaphysical knowledge, which ultimately leads to a critique of the representation of the possibility of a theoretical knowledge of God, can also be found in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. There he says: if inquiring reason—this is what Gregory calls curiously inquiring reason in Aristotelian terminology—has not even come to fathom what heaven, the sun, or any of the other wonders to be found in creation are in their essence, then the heart quakes in the face of the divine work. And if inquiring reason cannot grasp even this, how should it grasp the nature of that which lies beyond creation?¹³

It is clear that with this critique Gregory aims to strike at the Aristotelian conception of metaphysical reason, which as theoretical curiosity (*polypragmosynê*) aims to subordinate all of its investigation to a hidden essence of the thing. In our text, Gregory calls *polypragmosynê*—that is, curiously inquiring, purely theoretical reason—the “physiological” mentality, thus the thinking of

12 *Eun* II 115–119 (GNO I 259,26–260,27): Καί τί περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς λέγω; ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτῆς τὸ τὰς σωματικὰς ἀναδεδεγμένον ποιότητας ἐναργεῖ τινι καταλήψει μέχρι τοῦ δεῦρο τεθήραται. ἐὰν γάρ τις τῷ λόγῳ τὸ φαινόμενον εἰς τὰ ἐξ ὧν σύγκειται διαλύσῃ καὶ φιλώσας τῶν ποιότητων ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ κατανοῆσαι φιλονικῶσιν τὸ ὑποκείμενον, τί καταλειφθήσεται τῇ θεωρίᾳ, οὐ συνορώ. ὅταν γὰρ ἀφέλῃς τοῦ σώματος τὸ χρῶμα, τὸ σχῆμα, τὴν ἀντιτυπίαν, τὸ βάρος, τὴν πηλικότητα, τὴν ἐπὶ τόπου θέσιν, τὴν κίνησιν, τὴν παθητικὴν τε καὶ ἐνεργητικὴν διάθεσιν, τὸ πρὸς τί πως ἔχειν, ὧν ἕκαστον οὐδὲν ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ σώμα ἐστί, περὶ δὲ τὸ σῶμα τὰ πάντα, τί λοιπὸν ἔσται, ὃ τὸν τοῦ σώματος δέχεται λόγον, οὔτε δι’ ἑαυτῶν συνιδεῖν ἔχομεν οὔτε παρὰ τῆς γραφῆς μεμαθήκαμεν. ὁ δ’ ἑαυτὸν ἀγνοῶν πῶς ἂν τι τῶν ὑπὲρ ἑαυτὸν ἐπιγνοίῃ; καὶ ὁ τῇ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἀγνοίᾳ προειθισμένος ἄρ’ οὐχὶ φανερώς δι’ αὐτοῦ τούτου διδάσκεται πρὸς μηδὲν τῶν ἔξωθεν ἀποκεκρυμμένων ξενίζεσθαι; διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου στοιχεῖα τῇ μὲν αἰσθήσει τοσοῦτον γινώσκουμεν, ὅσον τὸ ἀφ’ ἑκάστου χρήσιμον πρὸς τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν δέχεσθαι, τὸν δὲ τῆς οὐσίας αὐτῶν λόγον οὔτε ἐμάθομεν οὔτε τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι ζημίαν ποιούμεθα. Τί γάρ μοι πολυπραγμονεῖν τοῦ πυρὸς τὴν φύσιν, πῶς ἐκτρίβεται, πῶς ἐξάπτεται, πῶς τῆς παρακειμένης δρασσόμενον ὕλης οὐ πρότερον ἀποχωρεῖ πρὶν διαφαγεῖν καὶ ἐξανάλῳσαι τὸ ὑποκείμενον, πῶς λανθάνει ὁ σπινθὴρ τῷ λίθῳ ἐγκείμενος, πῶς ψυχρὸς ὢν τοῖς ἀπτομένοις ὁ σίδηρος ἀπογεννᾷ τὴν φλόγα, πῶς τριβόμενα πρὸς ἑαυτὰ τὰ ξύλα πῦρ ἀναδιδωσι, πῶς ἀπαυγάζον ἐν ἡλίῳ τὸ ὕδωρ φλόγα ποιεῖ, τῆς τε ἐπὶ τὸ ἄνω φορᾶς τὴν αἰτίαν καὶ τὴν αἰκίνητον δύναμιν καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα παρέντες πολυπραγμονεῖν τε καὶ ἐξετάζειν μόνον τὸ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ χρήσιμον εἰς τὸν βίον ἑαυτῶν ἐνοήσαμεν, εἰδότες ὅτι οὐδὲν ἔλαττον ἔχει τοῦ πολυπραγμονοῦντος ὁ ἀπραγμόνως τὴν ὠφέλειαν δεχόμενος. Διὰ τοῦτο ὡς περιττὸν τε καὶ ἀνωφελὲς τὸ περὶ τῆς οὐσίας τῶν γενομένων ἀδολεσχεῖν ἢ γραφὴ παρήκε.

13 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 337,15–21): εἰ οὖν τῆς ἐνεργείας ἐκείνης ἔργα τὰ τε ἄλλα ταῦτα πάντα. εἰ οὖν τῆς ἐνεργείας ἐκείνης ἔργα τὰ τε ἄλλα πάντα καὶ τὰ οὐράνια κάλλη, οὕτω δὲ κατεῖληφεν ἡ ζητητικὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου διάνοια, τί κατ’ οὐσίαν ὁ οὐρανὸς ἐστίν ἢ ὁ ἥλιος ἢ ἄλλο τι τῶν φαινομένων ἐν τῇ κτίσει θαυμάτων, τούτου χάριν θροεῖται πρὸς τὴν θείαν ἐνέργειαν ἡ καρδία, ὅτι εἰ ταῦτα καταλαβεῖν οὐ χωρεῖ, πῶς τὴν ὑπερκειμένην τούτων καταλήψεται φύσιν.

natural philosophy. He will contrast this with the “mystical” as another type of metaphysics.¹⁴ Gregory also calls curiously inquiring reason—in Aristotelian terminology—“seeking reason”, since it does not succeed in coming to grips with the objects of the life-world, or indeed of creation itself, in their essence. How then should it come to grips with the nature of that which lies beyond this domain? What curiously inquiring can come to grips with is not its essence, but rather only the divine “activity” (*energeia*). For this reason, Gregory often calls the divine essence *apolypragmonêton*, that of which the curiously inquiring reason of the Aristotelian philosophy is simply deprived.¹⁵ What Gregory nevertheless does not want to call into question is the general possibility of a theoretical investigation that is so oriented, not even the theoretical investigation of the divine. In the sixth oration of *De beatitudinibus*, he expressly says: there are “many paths” of the knowledge of God. One of these is to understand God through his creation. In this case, however, God is not known in his essence, but rather as His creative wisdom, insofar as it has made itself visible in its activity (*energeiai*).¹⁶ Knowledge of this activity is, according to Gregory, the function but also the boundary of theoretical curiosity. Knowledge of essences is not possible for human reason. Gregory of Nyssa is the John Locke of ancient philosophy.¹⁷

- 14 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 339,14–19): ἐκ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ γνῶναι, ὅτι τοῦ θεοῦ τὸ γνωστὸν κατὰ τὴν τοῦ Παύλου φωνὴν διὰ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου κτίσεως νοούμενον καθορᾶται, τῆς περὶ τῶν ἀκαταλήπτων πολυπραγμοσύνης φεισόμεθα, ὥς ἂν μὴ διὰ τοῦ φυσιολογεῖσθαι τὴν ἀνέφικτόν τε καὶ ἀνεκφώνητον φύσιν ὕλην λάβωι κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας ἢ αἵρεσις. On the pre-Christian and Christian criticism of the theoretical “curiosity” cf. especially N. Brox, “Glauben und Forschen in der Alten Kirche”, in: F.R. Prostmeier (ed.), *Frühchristentum und Kultur*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 2007, 9–18.
- 15 *Vit Moys II* (GNO VII/1, 97,18–19; SC iter, 232): [...] ἀπολυπραγμόνητον εἶναι χρὴ τῶν ὑπὲρ κατὰ-ληψιν ὄντων τὴν κατανόησιν [...]; *Or cat* (GNO III/4 40,4); *An et res* (GNO III/3 93,8–9): [...] ἀπολυπραγμόνητον τὸν λόγον τὸν περὶ τοῦ πῶς ἕκαστόν ἐστι [...]; *Eun II* 97 (GNO I 255,1–3): Καὶ ἄλλως δ’ ἂν τις ἀσφαλὲς εἶναι φήσειεν ἀπολυπραγμόνητον ἔαν τὴν θεϊαν οὐσίαν ὡς ἀπόρρητον καὶ ἀνέπαφον λογισμοῖς ἀνθρωπίνους; *Eun II* 105 (GNO I 257,21–22): [...] αὐτὴν δὲ τὴν οὐσίαν ὡς οὔτε διανοίᾳ τινὶ χωρητὴν οὔτε λόγῳ φραστὴν ἀπολυπραγμόνητον εἶασε [...].
- 16 *Beat VI* (GNO VII/2 141,1–27): Πολλοὶ δὲ οἱ τῆς τοιαύτης κατανοήσεως τρόποι. [...] Οὕτω καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἐν τῇ κτίσει βλέποντες κόσμον, ἔννοιαν οὐ τῆς οὐσίας, ἀλλὰ τῆς σοφίας τοῦ κατὰ πάντα σοφῶς πεποιηκότος ἀνατυπούμεθα. [...] Ὁ γὰρ τῇ φύσει ἀόρατος, ὁρατὸς ταῖς ἐνεργείαις γίνεται, ἔντισσι τοῖς περὶ αὐτὸν καθορώμενος. On the distinction between *energeiai* and the essence of God, cf. also *Prof* (GNO VIII/1 138,14 ss.); *Eun I* 206 (GNO I 86,22 ss.); *Eun I* 426 (GNO I 150 ss.).
- 17 Cf. T. Kobusch, “Zeit und Grenze. Zur Kritik des Gregor von Nyssa an der Einseitigkeit der Naturphilosophie”, in: S.G. Hall (ed.), *Homilies on Ecclesiastes: an English Version with Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the VII. International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa, St. Andrews 5.–10. Sept. 1990*, Berlin 1993, 317; G. Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*, Durham 2013, 106 ff.

One must also understand Gregory's doctrine of the infinite progress towards the unlimited as a criticism of Aristotle. Aristotle's philosophy depends on the principle that human reason stops somewhere, that is, that in logic and all of its other disciplines, reason must find a final standpoint. Gregory, however, suggests that the end of every search constitutes a preliminary end, which in itself is only the beginning of a new search. Accordingly, a "standstill" at a final principle is not possible, and even if it should occur, it would be based on an illusion.¹⁸

II On the Possibility of a Practical Knowledge of God

Gregory's importance for the domain of the knowledge of God is not, however, having introduced negative theology into Christian philosophy. Rather, the importance of his thought must be seen in terms of a significant distinction. For Gregory, negative theology is clearly limited to theoretical philosophy. On the practical path, however, there is by all means a positive determination of that which God is. At several points in his work, Gregory expresses this distinction between the theoretical and the practical path. Here's how Gregory puts it in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*:

on our view, Scripture teaches that what lies beyond all constitution and establishment of beings, what it is in its essence, is inaccessible, untouchable and ineffable; that in its place however we have been given its sweet smell, which is prepared in us by the purity of virtue. Such a sweet smell imitates through its purity what is naturally immaculate, the good through the good, immortality through immortality, immutability

18 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 352,14–17): διδάσκει γὰρ διὰ τούτων ἡμᾶς ὅτι ἐπὶ τῆς πάντα νοῦν ὑπερεχούσης δυνάμεως εἰς καταλήψεώς ἐστι τρόπος οὐ τὸ στῆναι περὶ τὸ κατελιγμένον ἀλλὰ τὸ αἰεὶ ζητοῦντα τὸ πλεῖον τοῦ καταληφθέντος μὴ ἴστασθαι. Cf. *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 247,11–13): ἀλλὰ τὸ πέρας τοῦ εὑρεθέντος ἀρχὴ πρὸς τὴν τῶν ὑψηλοτέρων εὑρεσιν τοῖς ἀναβαίνουσι γίνεται καὶ οὔτε ὁ ἀνίων ποτε ἴσταται ἀρχὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς μεταλαμβάνων οὔτε τελεῖται. Cf. *Cant VI* (GNO VI 175,17–22): γέγονεν ἐν ταῖς προλαβούσαις ἀνόδοις πρὸς λόγον τῆς ἐκάστοτε γινομένης αὐξήσεως αἰεὶ πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον ἀλλοιούμενῃ καὶ οὐδέποτε ἐπὶ τοῦ καταληφθέντος ἀγαθοῦ ἴσταμένη, νῦν μὲν ἵππῳ παραβαλλομένη τῇ καταστρεψαμένη τὸν Αἰγύπτιον τύραννον, πάλιν δὲ ὁμίσκεις τε καὶ τρυγῶσιν εἰκαζομένη κατὰ τὸν περιουχένιον κόσμον. As H. Langerbeck has already cleared up in his remarks to *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 247,11) Gregory's ideas about the human reason as unable to reach a final standpoint in its inquiring are directed against Aristotelian logic. Cf. also E. Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa. Gregors Kritik am Gottesbegriff der klassischen Metaphysik*, Göttingen 1966, 165.

through immutability, and through all those virtues which are providentially realized in us, true virtue [...].¹⁹

What is inaccessible and unfathomable for the knowledge of essences is nevertheless achievable through virtue and morality, that is, on the practical path. The “imitation” that is at issue in the cited text, is, as for Plato where it also has the positive sense of *mimêsis* (Plato, *Respublica* 500c), the practical side of correct knowledge. Accordingly, an assimilation of the divine is possible only on the practical path, that is, as the actualization of virtue.²⁰ It is made possible through what is pure and divine: virtue. Thus, as Gregory states, it is in a certain sense the same “to possess virtue and the possession of divinity. For, virtue is not outside of the divine”.²¹

In the background of such reflections is Gregory’s doctrine of virtue, which he expounds above all in the text *De vita Moysis*. There, the divine being, and in other places Christ Himself, is described as “perfect virtue”.²² With this determination, Gregory follows in the footsteps of Origen.²³ For the theology of these authors—in comparison to the Aristotelian or Epicurean conception of God—is a big contribution for the moralization of the concept of God.

In contrast, human life is to a certain extent imperfect virtue. However, it is virtue, or morality, that constitutes the bridge connecting humanity and God. For this reason alone, it is possible to know God through self-knowledge, which already according to Origen’s *Commentary on the Song of Songs* is necessarily a practical kind of knowledge. For the rays of “a true and divine virtue”

19 *Cant* III (GNO VI 89,15–90,2): [...] ταῦτα διὰ τῶν εἰρημένων παιδεύειν ἡμᾶς τὸν λόγον οἰόμεθα ὅτι ἐκεῖνο μὲν, ὃ τί ποτε κατ’ οὐσίαν ἐστί, τὸ πάσης ὑπερκείμενον τῆς τῶν ὄντων συστάσεώς τε καὶ διοικήσεως ἀπρόσιτόν τε καὶ ἀναφές ἐστι καὶ ἀληπτον, ἡ δὲ ἐν ἡμῖν διὰ τῆς τῶν ἀρετῶν καθαρότητος μυρεψουμένη εὐωδία ἀντ’ ἐκείνου ἡμῖν γίνεται μιμουμένη τῷ καθ’ ἑαυτὴν καθαρῷ τὸ τῇ φύσει ἀκήρατον καὶ τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τῷ ἀφθάρτῳ τὸ ἀφθαρτον καὶ τῷ ἀναλλοιώτῳ τὸ ἀναλλοίωτον καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς κατ’ ἀρετὴν ἐν ἡμῖν κατορθουμένοις τὴν ἀληθινὴν ἀρετὴν [...].

20 *Cant* IX (GNO VI 271,11–14): πέρας γὰρ τῆς ἐναρέτου ζωῆς ἡ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἐστὶν ὁμοίωσις· καὶ τούτου χάριν ἡ τε τῆς ψυχῆς καθαρότης καὶ τὸ πάσης ἐμπαθοῦς διαθέσεως ἀνεπίμικτον δι’ ἐπιμελείας κατορθοῦται τοῖς ἐναρέτοις, [...].

21 *Cant* IX (GNO VI 285,16–17): ἔν γὰρ τρόπον τινὰ ἐστὶν ἀμφοτέρω ἡ τε τῆς τελείας ἀρετῆς καὶ ἡ τῆς θεότητος κτήσις· οὐ γὰρ ἔξω ἡ ἀρετὴ τῆς θεότητος.

22 *Vit Moys* I (GNO VII/1 4,10–12; SC 1167, 50): ἀλλὰ μὴν ὁ τὴν ἀληθὴ μετιὼν ἀρετὴν οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἢ Θεοῦ μετέχει, διότι αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ παντελής ἀρετὴ. Cf. also *Vit Moys* II (GNO VII/1 118,20; SC 1167, 274): (ἡ πέτρα δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστός, ἡ παντελής ἀρετὴ).

23 Cf. also the brilliant representation of A. Fürst in his “Einleitung”, in: Id., *Origenes, Werke mit deutscher Übersetzung*, Bd. 7: *Die Homilien zum Ersten Buch Samuel*, Berlin 2014, 36–49.

make the “inaccessible” comprehensible in the mirror of the soul.²⁴ For this reason, Gregory speaks in our text of a “voluntative mirror”.²⁵ Virtue, however, is in its formal determination not only the vision of the good, but above all its immutable preservation. Thus we arrive at the most “paradoxical” conception: here, in the domain of morality, the one who remains steadfast in the Good soonest reaches the summit of virtue, while the one who has no fixed footing in moral things remains in place and does not arrive at the goal of virtue.²⁶

Already, this shows us what kind of metaphysics we are here concerned with. It is not the distant, transcendent God that is here thought of as an object of metaphysics. Rather, it is the God in us that is portrayed through this theme. Not as already complete, but rather as something that “becomes” in us, if the soul finds its home in God.²⁷ It is thereby the becoming of God in the soul of human being, which, through this type of metaphysics, is as much carried out as analyzed. It is worth taking note of the significance of this metaphysical paradigm-change for the history of philosophy. As W. Dilthey already recognized, with Aristotle we are concerned with a “metaphysics of substantial forms” or a “metaphysics of the cosmos”, that is, a metaphysics of objective natural things, whereas the Church Fathers represented through Augustine a “metaphysics of the will”.²⁸ This means: a metaphysics of the subject. Gregory of Nyssa’s exegesis of the *Song of Songs* is in this a metaphysics of the subject,

24 *Cant* III (GNO VI 90,11–16): ἐν ἑαυτῷ δὲ καθάπερ ἐν κατόπτρῳ βλέπει τὸν ἥλιον· αἱ γὰρ τῆς ἀληθινῆς ἐκείνης καὶ θείας ἀρετῆς ἀκτίνες τῷ κεκαθαρμένῳ βίῳ διὰ τῆς ἀπορροεῦσης αὐτῶν ἀπαθείας ἐλλάμπουσιν ὁρατὸν ποιοῦσιν ἡμῖν τὸ ἀόρατον καὶ ληπτὸν τὸ ἀπρόσιτον τῷ ἡμετέρῳ κατόπτρῳ ἐνζωγραφοῦσαι τὸν ἥλιον.

25 *Cant* XV (GNO VI 440,7–8): [...] τὸ προαιρετικὸν τε καὶ ἔμψυχον κάτοπτρον [...]. Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 104,2–4): κατόπτρῳ γὰρ ἔοικεν ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ ἀνθρώπινον κατὰ τὰς τῶν προαιρέσεων ἐμφάσεις μεταμορφούμενον. In the medieval era—as for Bonaventure (*Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*, d. 8, p. 2, art. un., q. 6, ed. Coll. S. Bonavenurae (editio minor), Quaracchi 1938, 232) and Thomas Aquinas (*In II Sententiarum*, d. 11, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4)—the metaphor is taken up under the heading of *speculum voluntarium*.

26 *Vit Moys* II (GNO VII/1 118,3–13; SC 176, 272–273): Τοῦτο δὲ τὸ πάντων παραδοξότατον πῶς τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ στάσις ἐστὶ καὶ κίνησις. Ὁ γὰρ ἀνὴρ πάντως οὐχ ἵσταται καὶ ὁ ἐστὼς οὐκ ἀνέρχεται. Ἐνταῦθα δὲ διὰ τοῦ ἐστάναι τὸ ἀναβῆναι γίνεται. Τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν ὅτι ὅσω τις πάγιός τε καὶ ἀμετάθετος ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ διαμένει, τοσούτῳ πλεον τὸν τῆς ἀρετῆς διανύει δρόμον. Ὁ γὰρ περισφαλῆς τε καὶ ὀλισθηρὸς κατὰ τὴν τῶν λογισμῶν βάσιν, ἀβέβαιον τὴν ἐν τῷ καλῷ στάσιν ἔχων, κλυδωνιζόμενός τε καὶ περιφερόμενος, καθὼς φησιν ὁ Ἀπόστολος, καὶ ταῖς περὶ τῶν ὄντων ὑπολήψειςιν ἐπιδιστάζων καὶ κραδαινόμενος, οὐκ ἂν ποτε πρὸς τὸ ὕψος τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀναδράμοι.

27 *Cant* VI (GNO VI 179,6–7): ὅ τε γὰρ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γίνεται καὶ πάλιν εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἡ ψυχὴ μετοικίζεται; cf. also *Cant* VII (GNO VI 207,7–9): ὅτι μὲν οὖν ὁ τὸν θεὸν ἐν ἑαυτῷ φέρων φορεῖόν ἐστὶ τοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ καθιδρυμένου, δηλὸν καὶ πρὸ τῶν ἡμετέρων λόγων ἂν εἴη.

28 Cf. W. Dilthey, *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften*, (Gesammelte Schriften Bd. 1), Stuttgart—Göttingen 1990, 192; 206; 234sq.; 250–267.

which leads to “blending”, that is, to becoming one with, the sincere and the passionless.²⁹ Expressed in Neo-Platonic terms, this means that “you, if you look, will become that which it (i.e., God) is”.³⁰ Gregory thereby connects to a new type of metaphysics put forward by Plotinus according to which the soul does not simply contemplate the higher objects, but “becomes” what the spirit and ultimately also the One is in itself.³¹

Here, Gregory also seems to have taken up from Origen the motif of the birth of God in the human soul. It brings about in each individual a correspondingly unique “progress” from a moral point of view.³²

Consequently, this form of metaphysics concerns the self-transformation of the moral subject. In this sense, human being can make of itself what it wills. Depending on where the inclinations of the will tends, human nature takes up this determination of the will and becomes either wrathful, lustful, cowardly, among others, or patient, pure, peaceable, etc.³³ This means that the nature of

29 *Cant* I (GNO VI 23,3–7): [...] ἵνα [...] ὁ ἄνθρωπος [...] κολληθῇ τῷ κυρίῳ γένηται πνεῦμα ἐν διὰ τῆς πρὸς τὸ ἀκήρατον τε καὶ ἀπαθὲς ἀνακράσεως νόημα καθαρὸν ἀντὶ σαρκὸς βαρείας γενόμενος.

30 *Cant* II (GNO VI 68,7–10): [...] τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ φωτὸς ἐκμαγεῖον, πρὸς δὲ βλέπουσα ἐκεῖνο γίνῃ, ὅπερ ἐκεῖνός ἐστι, μιμουμένη τὸν ἐν σοὶ λάμποντα διὰ τῆς ἀντιλαμπούσης αὐγῆς ἐκ τῆς σῆς καθαρότητος. Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 98,8): [...] ὅταν τις διὰ τῶν ἔργων ταῦτα γένηται, ἀ ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν [...].

31 Cf. T. Kobusch, “Metaphysik als Einswerdung. Zur Plotins Begründung einer neuen Metaphysik”, in: L. Honnefelder—W. Schüßler (eds.), *Transzendenz. Zu einem Grundwort der klassischen Metaphysik*, Paderborn 1992, 93–114.

32 *Cant* III (GNO VI 96,7–15): τὸ γὰρ γεννηθὲν (ἐν) ἡμῖν παιδίον, ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὁ ἐν τοῖς δεξαμένοις αὐτὸν διαφόρως προκόπτων σοφία τε καὶ ἡλικία καὶ χάριτι οὐκ ἐν πάνσιν ὁ αὐτὸς ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ μέτρον τοῦ ἐν ᾧ γίνεται, καθὼς ἂν ὁ χωρὼν αὐτὸν ἱκανῶς ἔχῃ. τοιοῦτος φαίνεται ἡ νηπιόζων ἡ προκόπτων ἡ τελειούμενος [...]. On the history of the motif of the birth of God in the human soul, cf. H. Rahner, “Die Gottesgeburt. Die Lehre der Kirchenväter von der Geburt Christi im Herzen der Gläubigen”, *ZKTh* 59 (1935) 333–417. In the well-known sentence of Origen “What good is to me if the Word comes to dwell in the world, but I have not part in ihm?” (*Hom. in Ieremiam* 9, 1 SC 232 378,21–22) or in the version one can read in *Hom. in Lucam* (hom. 22, GCS 49 134,7–10) “What good is to you if Christ once came in the flesh, if he does not also come to your soul?”, the priority of the interiority over the historically contingent is so clearly stated as never before; cf. T. Kobusch, *Christliche Philosophie. Die Entdeckung der Subjektivität*, Darmstadt 2006, 138–151.

33 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 102,3–103,5): τὸ δὲ λεγόμενον τοιοῦτόν ἐστι· δεκτικὴ τῶν κατὰ γνώμην ἢ ἀνθρωπίνῃ γέγονε φύσις καὶ πρὸς ὅπερ ἂν ἡ ῥοπή τῆς προαιρέσεως αὐτὴν ἄγῃ, κατ’ ἐκεῖνο καὶ ἀλλοιοῦται· τοῦ τε γὰρ θυμοῦ παραδεξαμένη τὸ πάθος θυμώδης γίνεται καὶ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ἐπικρατησάσης εἰς ἡδονὴν διαλύεται, πρὸς δειλίαν τε καὶ φόβον καὶ τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστον πάθος τῆς ῥοπῆς γενομένης τὰς ἐκάστου τῶν παθῶν μορφὰς ὑποδύεται, ὥσπερ δὴ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου τὸ μακρόθυμον, τὸ καθαρὸν, τὸ εἰρηνικόν, τὸ ἀόρηγον, τὸ ἄλυπον, τὸ εὐθαρσές, τὸ ἀπτόητον, πάντα ταῦτα ἐν ἑαυτῇ δεξαμένη ἐκάστου τούτων ἐπισημαίνει τὸν χαρακτήρα τῇ καταστάσει τῆς ψυχῆς ἐν ἀταξίᾳ γαληνιάζουσα. In his German translation of Origen’s *Song-of-Songs-Commentary* (in:

humanity is fashioned and formed by its own will. The self-shaping of the subject and its apotheosis are one and the same. In this sense, Gregory expressed a sententious phrase that might well have been said by an ancient Sartre:

We become in a certain sense fathers of ourselves, when through a good will we shape ourselves, produce ourselves, and go forward into the light. This however we do by accepting God into our selves.³⁴

The divine appears in accordance with the attitude of the will, that is, in the way that we point to God through our determination of the will.³⁵

Higher moral development therefore allows something more and other than the divine to become visible. The corresponding moral transformation is not limited to retaining the same character. Rather, in each case it illuminates “the character of life itself” in the one that has made a stop towards moral perfection. Gregory states that there is an inner connection of this essential feature of the life of God, such that according to the increase in moral good, “one originates in and manifests itself through the other”.³⁶

This doctrine of the progressively manifesting features of the divine life is a typical characteristic of Gregory’s metaphysics of morality. In other passages from the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* Gregory expressly indicates that

Fontes Christiani, Bd. 16/2, Freiburg 1994, 495, n. 15) F. Dünzl rightly points out: “[...] *pro-hairesis* bedeutet dann ‘gestaltgewordene Willensfreiheit’”.

34 *Eccl VI* (GNO V 380,3–6): ἐαυτῶν γὰρ τρόπον τινὰ πατέρες γινόμεθα, ὅταν διὰ τῆς ἀγαθῆς προαιρέσεως ἑαυτοὺς πλάσωμέν τε καὶ γεννήσωμεν καὶ εἰς φῶς προαγάγωμεν. τοῦτο δὲ ποιούμεν διὰ τοῦ δέξασθαι ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὸν θεόν [...]. Cf. also *Vit Moys II* (GNO VII/1 34,8–14; SC 108): Τὸ δὲ οὕτω γεννᾶσθαι οὐκ ἐξ ἄλλοτρίας ἐστὶν ὁρμῆς, καθ’ ὁμοιότητα τῶν σωματικῶς τὸ συμβᾶν ἀπογεννώντων, ἀλλ’ ἐκ προαιρέσεως ὁ τοιοῦτος γίνεται τόκος. Καὶ ἔσμεν ἑαυτῶν τρόπον τινὰ πατέρες, ἑαυτοὺς οἷους ἂν ἐθέλωμεν τίκτοντες καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἰδίας προαιρέσεως εἰς ὅπερ ἂν ἐθέλωμεν εἶδος, ἢ ἄρρεν ἢ θῆλυ, τῷ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας λόγῳ διαπλασόμενοι. Cf. J. Gaith, *La conception de la liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1953, 71 f.

35 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 264,16–265,1): ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις πᾶσι τοῦτο παρὰ τῆς θείας φιλοσοφίας τὸ δόγμα μανθάνομεν ὅτι τοιοῦτον αἰεὶ γίνεται τὸ θεῖον ἡμῖν, οἷους ἂν ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θεῷ διὰ τῆς προαιρέσεως δεῖξωμεν [...].

36 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 186,6–12): οὕτω καὶ ἐν ταῖς κατὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν προκοπαῖς οὐ πάντοτε τῷ αὐτῷ παραμένονσι χαρακτηρί οἱ ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν διὰ τῶν ὑψηλοτέρων ἐπιθυμίας μεταμορφούμενοι, ἀλλὰ πρὸς λόγον τῆς αἰεὶ κατορθωθείσης ἐκάστῳ διὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν τελειότητος ἰδίας τις τῷ βίῳ χαρακτηρ ἐπιλαμβάνει ἄλλος ἐξ ἄλλου γινόμενός τε καὶ φαινόμενος διὰ τῆς τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐπαυξήσεως. On the concept of “character” in this connection, cf. also *Cant V* (GNO VI 140,1) and *IX* (GNO VI 271,11–16): πέρας γὰρ τῆς ἐναρέτου ζωῆς ἡ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἐστὶν ὁμοίωσις· καὶ τούτου χάριν ἢ τε τῆς ψυχῆς καθαρότης καὶ τὸ πάσης ἐμπαθοῦς διαθέσεως ἀνεπίμικτον δι’ ἐπιμελείας κατορθοῦται τοῖς ἐναρέτοις, ὥστε τινὰ χαρακτήρα τῆς ὑπερκειμένης φύσεως διὰ τῆς ἀστειοτέρας ζωῆς καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς γενέσθαι.

God, as that which eludes all categorical, that is theoretical knowledge, is also without any theoretically knowable feature, such that only the practical path of an approximation remains.³⁷

It is therefore in view of the transformation of the soul in its practical sense that is the primary object of this metaphysics. *Metamorphosis* is the *terminus technicus* for this type of spiritual self-transformation, that is, self-determination by the will, and it will remain the central theme of this kind of metaphysics up to the late medieval period.³⁸ The actual agency of this self-transformation is the will.

Together with its self-determining power, the will takes up a middle position between the kingdom of the material and the kingdom of the immaterial. It is the steward of interiority and responsible for the “tension” or “loosening” in our soul.³⁹ The middle position of the soul also means that the will stands in the middle between good and evil, predisposed to both, but sovereign in its choice. For this reason, Gregory also calls it, using an expression long current in philosophy, the “frontier” between good and evil.⁴⁰ The will itself has

37 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 357,3–20): ‘Ο δὲ ἐφεξῆς λόγος μάλλον ἡμῖν βεβαιοῖ τὴν προθεωρηθεῖσαν διάνοιαν ὅτι οὐκ ἐν τῷ καταλαμβάνεσθαι τὸ μέγεθος τῆς θείας γνωρίζεται φύσεως ἀλλ’ ἐν τῷ παριέναι πᾶσαν καταληπτικὴν φαντασίαν καὶ δύνανμιν· ἡ γὰρ ἐκβάσα ἤδη τὴν φύσιν ψυχῇ, ὡς ἂν μηδενὶ τῶν συνηθῶν πρὸς τὴν γνῶσιν τῶν ἀοράτων κωλύοιτο, οὔτε ζητοῦσα τὸ μὴ εὐρισκόμενον ἵσταται οὔτε καλοῦσα τὸ ἀνεκφώνητον παύεται, φησὶ γὰρ ὅτι ‘Ἐζήτησα αὐτόν καὶ οὐκ εὑρον αὐτόν. πῶς γὰρ ἂν εὐρεθείη ὃν μηνύει τῶν γινωσκομένων οὐδέν, οὐκ εἶδος, οὐ χρώμα, οὐ περιγραφή, οὐ ποσότης, οὐ τόπος, οὐ σχῆμα, οὐ στοχασμός, οὐκ εἰκασμός, οὐκ ἀναλογία; ἀλλὰ πάσης καταληπτικῆς ἐφόδου ἐξώτερος αἰεὶ εὐρισκόμενος ἐκφεύγει πάντως τὴν τῶν ζητούντων λαβὴν, διὰ τοῦτο φησιν ‘Ἐζήτησα αὐτόν, διὰ τῶν ἐρευνητικῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων ἐν λογισμοῖς καὶ νοήμασι, καὶ πάντων ἐξώτερος ἦν τὸν προσεγγισμὸν τῆς διανοίας διαδιδράσκων. ὁ δὲ παντὸς γνωριστικοῦ χαρακτήρος ἐξώτερος αἰεὶ εὐρισκόμενος πῶς ἂν διὰ τινος ὀνοματικῆς σημασίας περιληφθεῖη.

38 Cf. T. Kobusch, *Die Philosophie des Hoch- und Spätmittelalters* (Geschichte der Philosophie, Bd. v [ed. W. Röd]), München 2011, 384 ff.; 391.

39 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 345,19–346,2): μέση δὲ ἀμφοῖν ἐστῶσα ἡ αὐτεξούσιος ἡμῶν δυνάμις τε καὶ προαίρεσις δι’ ἑαυτῆς ἐμποιεῖ καὶ τόνον τῷ κάμνοντι καὶ ἀτονίαν τῷ κατισχύοντι· ἐν ᾧ γὰρ ἂν γένηται μέρει, τούτῳ δίδωσι κατὰ τοῦ ἄλλου τὰ νικητήρια. Here Gregory uses *tonos* and *atonia* for distinguishing what he usually differentiates through *epitasis* and *hyphesis* (cf. e.g.: *Eun I* 283 GNO I 109–110). *Tonos* and *atonia* represents the original Stoic conceptual pair, which is also the precursor of a distinction that will later become famous: *intentio* and *remissio formarum*.

40 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 333,13): ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη ψυχὴ δύο φύσεων οὖσα μεθόριος, ὧν ἡ μὲν ἀσώματός ἐστι καὶ νοερά καὶ ἀκήρατος ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα σωματικὴ καὶ ὑλώδης καὶ ἄλογος [...]; *Eun III/1* 121 (GNO II 45,1–2): οὐκοῦν ἐπὶ μόνων ἀληθῆς τὸ τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν οἷς μεθόριος πρὸς ἀρετὴν τε καὶ κακίαν ἡ φύσις [...]. On the expression *methorios* cf. J. Daniélou, “La notion de confins (methorios) chez Grégoire de Nysse”, *RSR* 49 (1961) 161–187, und T. Kobusch, *Studien zur Philosophie des Hierokles von Alexandrien. Untersuchungen zum christlichen Neuplatonismus*, München 1976, 141 ff.

an ambivalent nature. Because of its will, or indeed its self-determined element, humanity has in itself the “likeness” of God and at the same time a “fickle nature” (*physis treptê*).⁴¹ It is not as though evil is identical with the material; rather it is through dependence on the material that evil is as it were “created”. For this reason, Gregory also calls human being the demiurge of evil or also, as in the *Commentary to the Song of Songs*, the “inventor of evil”.⁴² Along with the whole of early Christianity Gregory teaches that God gave the power of self-determination to beings endowed with reason so that they might bear responsibility, and so that they might do the good not involuntarily through compulsion, but rather in the sense of a good action of the free will.⁴³

III The Univocity of Morality

We absolutely cannot understand Gregory’s doctrine of freedom and virtue unless we presuppose a thesis that had already been developed by Clement of Alexandria and Origen: the thesis that morality has the same meaning for God and humanity. Or, as I have called it: the thesis of the univocity of morality. Such an idea had a manifold reception in modern philosophy and its presence is well attested in Deism, in Leibniz, in Kant and in classical German philos-

41 *Or cat* 8 (GNO III/4 35,23–25; SC 453 200): Ἐπεὶ οὖν ἐν τούτοις καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἦν, ᾧ τὸ τρεπτόν τῆς φύσεως πρὸς τὸ ἐναντίον παρώλισθεν [...]. At the end of *Perf* (GNO VIII/1 212–214), Gregory clearly states that the “transformable nature” of the human being is not only the ground for a possible moral lapse, but also the ground for a possible uninterrupted moral progress.

42 The human being is, according to Gregory of Nyssa (*Cant* II, GNO VI 115,1), the “inventor of evil”; it is also called the “demiurge of evil” in *An et res* (GNO III/3 42,7–8); cf. *Infant* (GNO III/2 92,16), where the human will is the inventor of evil: κακὸν γὰρ κατ’ οἰκείαν ὑπόστασιν οὐδὲν, μὴ ἐν τῇ προαιρέσει τοῦ κακῶς βιούντος δημιουργούμενον. Cf. *Virg* XII (GNO VIII/1 298,19–299,14; SC 119, 402–404): θεὸς γὰρ θάνατον οὐκ ἐποίησεν, ἀλλὰ τρόπον τινὰ κτίστης καὶ δημιουργὸς τοῦ κακοῦ κατέστη ὁ ἄνθρωπος. [...] τὴν τοῦ κακοῦ πείραν ἐν τῇ ἀποστροφῇ τῆς ἀρετῆς τῇ ἰδίᾳ προαίρεσει δημιουργήσας. Κακὸν γὰρ ἔξω προαιρέσεως κείμενον καὶ κατ’ ἰδίαν ὑπόστασιν θεωρούμενον ἐν τῇ φύσει τῶν ὄντων ἐστὶν οὐδὲν. In *Or cat* (GNO III/4 28,10; SC 453 184) the human being is called the “demiurge of non-being”.

43 *Cant* II (GNO VI 55,3–7): ἔδωκε δὲ τῇ λογικῇ φύσει τὴν αὐτεξούσιον χάριν καὶ προσέθηκε δύναμιν εὐρετικὴν τῶν καταθυμίων, ὥς ἂν τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν χώραν ἔχοι καὶ μὴ κατηναγκασμένον εἶη τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἀκούσιον, ἀλλὰ κατόρθωμα προαιρέσεως γένοιτο. On the formal determination of “self-determinacy” cf. *Or cat* (GNO III/4 20,20–22; SC 453 170): Ἐπεὶ οὖν τοῦτο τῆς αὐτεξουσιότητός ἐστι τὸ ἰδίωμα, τὸ κατ’ ἐξουσίαν αἰρεῖσθαι τὸ καταθυμίον [...]. On the precedent history of the idea of freedom as something given to humanity by God, see T. Kobusch, “Selbstbestimmte Freiheit. Das frühe Christentum im Kontext der antiken Philosophie”, *ZNT* 35 (2015), 47–55.

ophy. In ancient times, it was stated with the aim of pointing out the gradual difference between the human and divine morality, which is actually the same concerning its essence. In modern philosophy, its statement and defence was directed against a typical doctrine of the Late Scholastic philosophy, i.e. the moral-positivistic idea of the absolute arbitrariness in the determination of the moral concepts by God: they have been established just by His (arbitrary) will.

I cannot adequately deepen here such a topic; however, let me refer to the paper I presented 2013 at the Colloquium Origenianum Undecimum in Aarhus (DK) in which I set forth the thesis in detail.⁴⁴

Bibliography

- Brox, N. "Glauben und Forschen in der Alten Kirche", in: F.R. Prostmeier (ed.), *Frühchristentum und Kultur*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 2007, 9–18.
- Daniélou, J. "La notion de confins (methorios) chez Grégoire de Nysse", *RSR* 49 (1961) 161–187.
- Dilthey, W. *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften*, (Gesammelte Schriften Bd. 1), Stuttgart—Göttingen 1990.
- Dünzl, F. *Gregor von Nyssa, Homilien zum Hohenlied*, Fontes Christiani 16/3, Freiburg 1994.
- Fürst, A. *Origenes, Werke mit deutscher Übersetzung, Bd. 7: Die Homilien zum Ersten Buch Samuel*, Berlin 2014.
- Gaith, J. *La conception de la liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1953.
- Hadot, P. "Epoptheia", in: J. Ritter et al. (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Bd. 2, Basel—Stuttgart 1972, 599.
- Karamanolis, G. *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*, Durham 2013.
- Kobusch, T. *Studien zur Philosophie des Hierokles von Alexandrien. Untersuchungen zum christlichen Neuplatonismus*, München 1976;
- Kobusch, T. "Metaphysik 111", in: J. Ritter et al. (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Bd. 5, Basel—Stuttgart 1980, 1196–1202;
- Kobusch, T. "Metaphysik als Einswerdung. Zu Plotins Begründung einer neuen Metaphysik", in: L. Honnefelder—W. Schüßler (eds.), *Transzendenz. Zu einem Grundwort der klassischen Metaphysik*, Paderborn 1992, 93–114;

44 Cf. T. Kobusch, "Die Univozität des Moralischen. Zur Wirkung des Origenes in Deismus und Aufklärung", in: A.-C. Jacobsen, *Origeniana undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought. Papers of the nth International Origen Congress, Aarhus University, 26–31 August 2013*, BETL 279, Leuven 2016, 29–45.

- Kobusch, T. "Zeit und Grenze. Zur Kritik des Gregor von Nyssa an der Einseitigkeit der Naturphilosophie", in: S.G. Hall (ed.), *Homilies on Ecclesiastes: an English Version with Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the VII. International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, St. Andrews 5.–10. Sept. 1990, Berlin 1993, 299–317;
- Kobusch, T. "Epoptie—Metaphysik des inneren Menschen", *Quaestio* 5 (2005) 23–36;
- Kobusch, T. *Christliche Philosophie. Die Entdeckung der Subjektivität*, Darmstadt 2006;
- Kobusch, T. *Die Philosophie des Hoch- und Spätmittelalters* (Geschichte der Philosophie, ed. W. Röd, Bd. v), München 2011;
- Kobusch, T. "Das Johannesevangelium: Metaphysik der christlichen Philosophie. Von Origenes bis J.G. Fichte", *RTPM* 81/2 (2014) 213–235;
- Kobusch, T. "Selbstbestimmte Freiheit. Das frühe Christentum im Kontext der antiken Philosophie", *ZNT* 35 (2015), 47–55;
- Kobusch, T. "Die Univozität des Moralischen. Zur Wirkung des Origenes in Deismus und Aufklärung", in: A.-C. Jacobsen, *Origeniana undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought. Papers of the 11th International Origen Congress, Aarhus University, 26–31 August 2013*, BETL 279, Leuven 2016, 29–45.
- Mühlenberg, E. *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa. Gregors Kritik am Gottesbegriff der klassischen Metaphysik*, Göttingen 1966.
- Rahner, H. "Die Gottesgeburt. Die Lehre der Kirchenväter von der Geburt Christi im Herzen der Gläubigen", *ZKTh* 59 (1935) 333–417.

Dew on the Locks of the Beloved: the *In Canticum Canticorum* on Faith and Knowledge

Martin Laird, O.S.A.

1 Introduction

For all of Gregory of Nyssa's association with the apophatic tradition, the unknowability of the divine *ousia*, and rightly so. If one reads, however, his *Homilies on the Song of Songs* with *only* this in mind, the impatient reader of Gregory's most theologically rich work, will likely miss the fact that Gregory's apophatic theology assumes the shape it does precisely because Gregory is so concerned with knowledge, teaching and doctrine. What is his concern? To begin with Gregory is concerned to show that the most reliable knowledge, teachings or doctrines concerning God, are those grounded in, indeed the fruit of, apophatic union, which is often signaled by its classical markers and motifs such as *anabasis*, *aphairesis*, alpha-privitives and so forth.

Nor can Gregory's apophatic pedagogy be reduced to anti-Eunomian polemic, though surely this is present. In these *Homilies* Gregory is concerned to show us several things. First, he wants to show that a fully developed apophatic theology is not about divine absence, but about a surfeit of divine *presence* and how the divine presence manifests as the Word itself, the second person of the Trinity, incarnate in the text of Scripture, gives something of itself to the discursive mind. Second, Gregory does not want to suggest that the many examples of union with the Word Incarnate in the text of Scripture, such as we see in the figures of the Bride, the Beloved Disciple, St. Paul, compromises in any way the unknowability of the divine *ousia*. And third, by the very fact of this apophatic union beyond the grasp of all concepts and images, the Bride, the Beloved Disciple, St. Paul, among others, all *receive something conceptual* in the form of teachings and doctrines which are in some way passed on for the good of all. Hence, Gregory leads us into yet another of his preaching paradoxes. The ascent to apophatic union with God has a clear contour: by virtue of this apophatic union, the soul, having been trained by (*askesis*) of Solomonic writings is led by the Word incarnate in Scripture itself into divinizing union. By virtue of this divinizing union the person is transfigured and thereby takes on the incarnational dynamic of the Word and as a result is sent forth in ecclesial mission.

As personal and consummating as divinizing union is, it is far from private to the individual—and this is crucial to grasp—*divinizing union for Gregory of*

Nyssa is also deeply ecclesial. For Gregory of Nyssa, apophatic union, beyond all image and concept, paradoxically grounds the very possibility of being able to teach something true of God. As I have argued elsewhere, Gregory's apophasis flowers as logophasis: that is the Word *speaking itself* in the deeds and discourse of those in apophatic union with the mystery of God in Christ.¹

How this happens is crucial to understanding the vital relationship Gregory sees between faith and knowledge, and serves further to show that we can know something of God upon which truth claims can be made, without pinning down God by concepts, and yet by which ecclesial life is shaped.

For Gregory, apophatic union bestows something to the discursive mind. What does it do? The discursive mind is trained and formed by the very apophatic union into which the mind has been led by the Word, in which the discursive mind cannot grasp, simply because there is nothing for it to grasp. However, and this is a characteristic nuance intrinsic to Gregory's apophaticism, in apophatic union the Bride, the Beloved Disciple, Paul, among others, the discursive mind is transfigured from a compulsive, obsessive, clinging mind to an intellect that is humbled by adoration and can therefore receive and serve. But before developing this further let us consider some special challenges in reading the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*.

2 Certain Difficulties in Reading the Homilies on the Song of Songs

It is very nearly a throw-away line to say that if one seeks in Gregory of Nyssa an author who is consistently organized in his manner of pursuing an argument by careful exposition, consistency and coherence, then Gregory of Nyssa will at times disappoint. However, this does not mean that Gregory's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* is untidy or remotely arbitrary. As with patristic theology in general, it is vitally important to realize that patristic theology is thoroughly grounded in and shaped by Scripture. Hence, one must always take note of what Scriptural *lemma* Gregory is commenting on, for this leads him to develop his thought in a certain direction as opposed to another. Without an eye for this, one can easily conclude that Gregory is frequently inconsistent. For example, one of Gregory's signature themes is what many call a "mysticism of darkness". This is surely present, as we see both in the *Life of Moses* as well as in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*. However, in each of these texts Gregory only pursues

1 M. Laird, "Apophasis and Logophasis in Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentarius in Canticum Cantorum*", *Studia Patristica* 34 (2001) 126–132.

this rich theme of luminous darkness when the scriptural *lemmata* he is commenting on lead him in this direction. Without these scriptural *lemmata*, such as Ex 20.21, for example, Gregory prefers to speak of the soul's divinization in light.²

Moreover, in addition to the scriptural *lemmata* on which he comments, which in turn lead him to develop his thought along certain lines, the patient reader must keep a close eye on Gregory's imagery.³ With respect to Gregory's epistemology, which is fundamental to a proper understanding of the relationship between faith and knowledge, one needs to take note of the imagery of flow: whether this be the flow of water, wine, milk, dew, or honey, even perfume's effulgence. The imagery of flow often expresses both divine presence and important epistemic themes of one sort or another, which we shall explore as Gregory considers breasts, dew, the bride and the Beloved Disciple.

3 "By the Grasp of Faith"

One needs likewise to be aware of the importance in these *Homelies* of the role of the faculty of supranoeitic union with God. Gregory does not always give this a precise term as, say, Plotinus does in calling this faculty (among other terms) "the crest of the wave of nous" or the *Chaldaen Oracles*, which rose to new importance in late Neoplatonism, "the flower of the mind" or "fire of the mind". However, in certain apophatic contexts Gregory does use a precise term for apophatic union: "*pistis*"-faith.⁴ Let us consider two illustrative examples of this (among several possible): Abraham's communion with the divine nature and the bride's grasping the Bridegroom by faith.

Gregory comments on Heb 11.8–9, Abraham's journey *by faith*. Abraham leaves behind his land, leaves behind his people, etc. (letting go or leaving behind are aphairctic markers). Observe how Gregory's point of departure is biblical, and he recasts Abraham's journey by faith into an interior journey; for instead of Abraham leaving behind his land, he must leave behind *himself* with

2 M. Laird, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Mysticism of Darkness", *Journal of Religion* 79 (1999) 592–616; see also, B. Daley, "'Bright Darkness' and Christian Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa on the Dynamics of Mystical Union", in: M.J. Himes—S.J. Pope (eds.), *Finding God in All Things: Essays in Honor of Michael J. Buckley, S.J.*, New York 1996, 215–230.

3 See M. Canévet's still unrivalled *Grégoire de Nysse et l'herméneutique biblique: Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu*, Paris 1983.

4 See M. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge and Divine Presence*, Oxford 2004, 108–130.

his obsession with base and earthly thoughts. Abraham renounces all concepts and images that represent God.⁵ In this context of an epistemic ascent, we see that faith becomes the faculty of union; “faith unites the searching mind uniting with the divine nature”.⁶ While designating a cognitive faculty that unites the person with God is not new, to name this faculty *pistis* in clearly recognizable apophatic contexts (in this case an epistemic ascent) is rather novel for Christian writers before Gregory. Moreover, one should not overlook the necessity of grace in Abraham’s union with God by means of faith. Abraham is responding to God’s initiative in calling Abraham out of his own country.

We see the outstanding example of faith as a faculty of apophatic union in the bride’s search for the Bridegroom in *Homily* 6. Gregory comments on Ct 3.1–4 and structures his commentary according to an easily recognizable, apophatic ascent, characterized by classical markers of *anabasis* and *aphairesis*. The bride finds herself forsaking all sensual perception and is suddenly embraced by the divine night (*theia nux*). She sought him on her bed at night that she might know his essence (*ousia*). She continues her ascent through the angelic rank, ever higher, ever letting go of what ever is not the Bridegroom’s essence. Having let go of everything, her mind has grasped, she finally finds her Beloved “by the grasp of faith”.⁷ She will not let him go until he enters the chamber of her heart, and immediately her heart receives this divine indwelling. We shall return to this image of the heart to show its vital, epistemic role. For the moment, let us notice once again the unique role that faith (*pistis*) serves. As we saw in the previous example in *Conta Eunomium* 11, Abraham’s journey by faith unites him to the divine nature. But in *Homily* 6, in a more clearly apophatic context, faith, denuded of concepts and images, unites with the divine *ousia* and, as a result, also *mediates* divine presence.

The exultation of *pistis* in the fourth-century, Hellenistic patrimony comes as a certain shock to the ears of educated non-Christians, but also as enlightening to Hellenized Christians entering the Church in the fourth century. Hellenized non-Christians would be aghast at the thought of this exaltation of *pistis* as the noblest faculty of supranoeitic union. Since at least the time of Plato’s

5 M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nysse et l’herméneutique biblique: Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu*, 96.

6 *Eun* 11 89 (GNO I 253,25–28): οὐκ ἄλλως προσεγγίσει θεῷ, μὴ πίστει μεσιτευούσης καὶ συναπτούσης δι’ ἑαυτῆς τὸν ἐπιζητούντα νοῦν πρὸς τὴν ἀκατάληπτον. All translations from Gregory are my own; yet I have taken account of those by C. McCambley, *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Brookline 1987, and R. Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012.

7 *Cant* VI (GNO VI 183,23): τῇ τῆς πίστεως λαβῇ [...].

allegory of the line, *pistis* was considered among the most unreliable cognitive states. Hence, Gregory of Nyssa is rehabilitating and exalting *pistis* on behalf of the growing numbers of highly educated people entering the Christian community in this period. For our purposes it is important to see that in *clearly marked apophatic contexts*, Gregory employs the word “faith” as a faculty that not only unites with the divine *ousia* but also mediates divine indwelling in the hearts of all, yet without compromising the unknowability of the divine nature.

4 Dew on the Locks of the Beloved

Let us turn to other examples in these *Homilies* to see what else union with the Beloved mediates. Let us consider (yet again) the bride, the Beloved Disciple, the flow of water, and dew on the locks of the beloved.

“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. For your breasts are better than wine”. This extraordinary *lemma* from the opening lines of the *Song of Songs* sets the tone and guiding theme of *Homily* 1. The bride draws close to the mouth of the Bridegroom in order to receive his kiss. But the Bridegroom’s mouth is a fountain of flowing water that are, as Gregory says “words of eternal life”. She places her mouth on the fountain of his mouth and is *herself* filled with “words of eternal life”. There is much to comment on in this rich passage: the kiss as union, *epektasis*: instead of the Bride being filled by placing her mouth on this fountain, her desire expands. Yet for our purposes I wish to point out that she is not immersed in the silence of a divine night of unknowing (the *lemma* doesn’t allow for that); rather she is filled with words of a particular sort, “words of eternal life”.⁸

Gregory continues with the rest of the *lemma*, “Your breasts are better than wine”. These breasts, says Gregory, are filled with “divine milk”, supplied from the treasure house of the heart.⁹ The breasts are means by which God nourishes us. Now listen to what he says about what flows into the divine breasts: “the milk flowing into these breasts is the milk of divine instruction”.¹⁰ The language of flow implies cooperation with grace. While milk is normally associated

8 See *Cant* I (GNO VI 32,11–15): διὰ τοῦτο ποθεῖ προσεγγίσει τῇ πηγῇ τῆς πνευματικῆς ζωῆς ἡ παρθένος ψυχὴ. ἡ δὲ πηγὴ ἐστὶ τοῦ νυμφὸς τὸ στόμα ὅθεν τὰ ῥήματα τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς ἀναβρύοντα πληροὶ τὸ στόμα τὸ ἐφελκόμενον [...].

9 See *Cant* I (GNO VI 33,17–18): ὄνομα δὲ ἐστὶ τῷ θησαυρῷ ἡ καρδία, ἀφ’ ἧς ἐστὶ τοῖς μαζοῖς ἡ χορηγία τοῦ θείου γαλακτος [...].

10 *Cant* I (GNO VI 35,9).

with food for infants, this is divine milk, and therefore nobler than the wine of human learning: “Hence”, Gregory says, “better are the divine breasts than human wine”.¹¹

Here we can stop to make a few observations, which will help us see the epistemology underlying this rich imagery and see the connection between faith and knowledge, instruction or teaching born of divine union. Gregory distinguishes the wine of human learning, from the milk of divine instruction that fills the bride’s breasts, or the words of eternal life that fill the bride’s mouth as she places her mouth on the fountain of the Bridegroom’s mouth. Let us remember that for Gregory, divine union also mediates. This union is what mediates the knowledge, instruction, and teaching that the bride has received.¹²

Where does this knowledge born of union come from? To understand this one must understand how the heart was understood to function in Late Antiquity. The heart had many functions, but here, where Gregory is relying (directly or indirectly) on Galen’s *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* the heart plays an epistemic role; for it houses or could be a synonym for the *hegemonikon*, a word of Stoic provenance that signifies the directing faculty of the soul.¹³ Remember that divine union has a mediational role. In order for the *hegemonikon* to assume fully this mediating role, the soul must be purified and trained by the ascetical pedagogy it receives in its journey through the tryptich of Solomonic wisdom that culminates in the *Song of Songs*, where it receives what is freely given it. It is precisely the *hegemonikon* that receives and distributes these drops of insight, divine teaching, or instruction that is grounded in divine union so as to serve the preaching paradox of the church in mission. For Gregory says the result of this divine teaching mediated to the heart (*hegemonikon*) “reveals an ecclesial concern [...]”. The apostles, the bride and any number of biblical figures, “cannot keep the good just for themselves. They pass on the same grace to those who came after them”. Gregory is careful to ground whatever teaching or insight in the deepest divine union possible. While we cannot comprehend the divine *ousia*, the Word incarnate in exegetical figures like the Bride, John, Paul, Thekla continues the incarnational dynamic of the Word throughout the world but only insofar as they have enjoyed union beyond all concept and image. Hence, while Gregory’s notion of divine union remains a clear example of *apophasis*, it flowers as *logophasis*: through the deeds and discourse of

11 *Cant* 1 (GNO VI 35,13–14): διὰ τοῦτο κρείττους οἱ θεῖοι μαστοὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου οἴνου.

12 Gregory has an ample vocabulary of union: ἀνάκρασις, ἔνωσις, κοινωνία, προσεγγίσις, συνάπτω, σύνειμι, συζυγία, among others.

13 C. Desalvo, *L'oltre nel presente: La filosofia dell'uomo in Gregorio di Nissa*, Milano 1996, 53–57, especially note 38.

the bride, John, Paul, Thekla, the Word has the same impact on all believers as the Word had on these great scriptural figures.

5 The Lord's Breast

Let us return to the heart. Just as the physical heart distributes milk to the breasts, so the breasts of the Bridegroom are filled with divine teaching. This is important to keep in mind as we turn to the Beloved Disciple in *Homily* 1. He reclines on the Lord's breast; once again we see the same motif of epistemic flow. Just as the bride draws close to the Bridegroom, placing her mouth on the fountain of his mouth and is thus filled with words of eternal life, something similar happens to the Beloved Disciple when he reclines on the Lord's breast, which Gregory calls "the fountain of life". As John places his heart "like a sponge" on the heart of the Lord, a flow opens between these two hearts. The flow, however, is in one direction from the Lord's breast to John's. Thus the Beloved Disciple receives and is filled, as the Bride was filled, with an ineffable communication of the mysteries at the heart of the Lord.

What is the effect of heart adhering to heart, receiving this flow of ineffable communication? The Beloved Disciple continues to mediate this flow of ineffable communication and turns round to offer us the "breast filled by the Word"¹⁴ and offers us what he himself received, as he proclaims loudly the eternal Word. Let us observe that John has done what the bride in *Homily* 3 has done: her more technically signaled apophatic union with the Bridegroom by the grasp of faith *both unites and mediates*. By the ungrasping grasp of faith (grasping no concepts), faith likewise mediates divine indwelling in her heart. For the sponge of John's heart mediated "ineffable communication of divine mysteries". But more importantly John, as a result of union with the Lord, continues the incarnational dynamic, thereby enabling him to "proclaim loudly the eternal word".¹⁵ We see the very same dynamic is in *Homily* 7, but this time the breast is that of the bride who becomes full of teaching, again mediated to the breast through the heart (or *hegemonikon*). She cannot contain within her breast what she has received. Her breast cannot, as Gregory says: "It does not keep grace enclosed within it, but offers the breast of the Word to those who need it".

¹⁴ *Cant* 1 (GNO VI 41,9–10): [...] καὶ ἡμῖν ἐπέχει τὴν πληρωθεῖσαν ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου θηλὴν [...].

¹⁵ *Cant* 1 (GNO VI 41,11 ff.).

By virtue of the divine union enjoyed by both the Beloved Disciple and by the bride, they exhibit the double face of union: gracious generosity or the Word through the deeds and discourse of these biblical, ecclesial figures who mediate to the world the incarnating dynamic of the Word as proclamation, as teaching to those who are in need. For Gregory the distinguishing mark of divine union in these *Homilies* is this double face of union: insofar as the bride, Paul, the Beloved Disciple experience and embody divine union, they are as a direct result able to be vehicles for others of the incarnating dynamism of the Word.

Having provided examples of the double face of union, *apophasis* and ecclesial mission of the bride and the Beloved disciple, among others, we can see that for Gregory of Nyssa divine union mediates something of what it has encountered of ineffable Mystery. Given the prevalence of the image of the heart, it is important to realize that Gregory uses this term in two senses. In one sense we see the heart serving one of its primary functions: lactation. There is, however, a deeper sense. The heart fills the breast of the bride with milk of divine teaching. Underlying these images of both the bride and the Beloved Disciple, as well as their respective relationships with the Lord's breast, we see a simple epistemology. Just as the biological heart distributes milk to the bride's breasts, so the epistemic heart, the seat of the *hegemonikon*, supplies her breasts the milk of divine teaching which cannot be contained and must be used for the nourishment of those who need it. We see again the double face of union as the Beloved Disciple lay on the Lord's breast like a sponge and receives or absorbs a divine transmission. The Beloved Disciple becomes a vehicle of the incarnating dynamic of the Word and offers what his heart receives from the fountain of the Lord's breast, enabling the Beloved Disciple to *proclaim* the Eternal Word; for he himself has communed with and has absorbed like a sponge the Eternal Word. This enables Gregory to conclude with an exhortation: "Let us love, therefore, the flow of your teaching".

Now let us conclude by looking at one final demonstration of divine teaching proceeding from apophatic union, however well signaled, by considering what Gregory makes of "dew on the locks of the Beloved" in *Homily* 11. Gregory comments on Ct 5.2–7, "Open to me my sister, my close one, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is covered with dew and my locks with the drops of the night [...]" The *Homily* is one of his richest, but to stay close to our theme of faith and knowledge I limit myself to Ct 5.2. The Beloved knocks at the bride's door and says "Open to me. For my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night". It seems that the Bridegroom's locks are so heavily bedewed that drops from the night's dew form on his locks. The Bridegroom has already informed her that her mind is a door, which she will open. The Bridegroom says she must draw near Truth and become Truth's consort. Her reward for receiv-

ing the Bridegroom and letting him dwell within her is “dew from my head of which I am full and the drops of the night running off my locks”.¹⁶ In this case, as in many others, the bride receives the Bridegroom as divine presence. But this time there is a significant nuance with direct implications for the knowledge of God: The Bridegroom’s presence within the Bride is *moisture*: the dew of divine presence; it *moistens* the mind with *knowledge*, however obscure. Elsewhere in this *Homily* Gregory says: it is not possible for someone entering the interior of the sanctuary (as an image of divine union: imageless, beyond the grasp of concepts) to encounter inundating rainstorms of knowledge, but one must be content if the truth “bedew one’s knowledge with delicate insights”.¹⁷ Again we see Gregory ground in imageless union any knowledge, “delicate insight”, the soul or Christian community might have of God.

In *Homily* 13 the moisture from the locks of the beloved are not mere drops of knowledge that bedew the mind, but are more forcefully described as the “the rain of teaching watering the living lands so that the fields of God may bear fruit”.¹⁸

We should keep in mind that while the divine *ousía* transcends any image or concept, we must remember that transcendence also transcends transcendence, and without compromising the incomprehensibility and ineffability of the divine *ousía*, also proves to be the ground of the incarnational dynamic that suffuses these *Homilies* in order that this rain of teaching, drops of insight, eternal truths, may both be deeply grounded in profound experience of God but because of this carry on the incarnational dynamic of the Word to the entire Christian community. This is part and parcel of Gregory’s ecclesial apophaticism.

Is Gregory the relentless apophaticist that some have called him? He is and he is not. The way in which Gregory is not the apophatic absolutist seems largely overlooked by scholars of Gregory’s apophatic theology in general. Indeed for all Gregory’s apophaticism he values at the same time, knowledge that flows as teaching to the heart, the directing faculty of the soul (*hegemonikon*). While the discursive mind does not grasp the divine *ousia*, through the ungrasping grasp of faith, God does “put down roots in the depths of the

16 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 324,12–14).

17 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 325,21–326,3): οὐ γάρ ἐστι δυνατὸν τὸν ἐντὸς τῶν ἀδύτων τε καὶ ἀθεωρήτων γενόμενον ὁμβρῷ τινὶ τῆς γνώσεως ἐντρυφεῖν ἢ χερμάρρῳ, ἀλλ’ ἀγαπητὸν εἰ λεπταῖς τισι καὶ ἀμυδραῖς διανοαῖς ἐπιψεκάζει τὴν γνώσιν αὐτῶν ἢ ἀλήθεια [...].

18 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 392,5–6) ἀφ’ ὧν γίνεται τῆς διδασκαλίας ὁ ὄμβρος, ὁ τὰς ἐμψύχους ἀρούρος ποτίζων πρὸς τὴν εὐκαρπλίαν τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ γεωργίων.

mind” and waters the mind with divine teaching.¹⁹ Beyond the grasp of comprehension though the divine nature is, its gracious freedom overflows in such away as to both ground and bedew knowledge with Presence.

Bibliography

- Canévet, M. *Grégoire de Nysse et l'herméneutique biblique: Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu*, Paris 1983.
- Daley, B. “‘Bright Darkness’ and Christian Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa on the Dynamics of Mystical Union”, in: M.J. Himes—S.J. Pope (eds.), *Finding God in All Things: Essays in Honor of Michael J. Buckley, S.J.*, New York 1996, 215–230.
- Desalvo, C. *L'oltre nel presente: La filosofia dell'uomo in Gregorio di Nissa*, Milano 1996.
- Laird, M. “Gregory of Nyssa and the Mysticism of Darkness”, *Journal of Religion* 79 (1999) 592–616.
- Laird, M. “Apophasis and Logophasis in Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum*”, *Studia Patristica* 34 (2001) 126–132.
- Laird, M. *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge and Divine Presence*, Oxford 2004.
- McCambley, C. *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Brookline 1987.
- Norris, R. *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012.

19 See M. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith*, 132.

Spuren von Trinitätstheologie in den Hoheliedhomilien Gregors von Nyssa

Volker Henning Dreccoll

Trinitätstheologisch sind die Hoheliedhomilien des Gregor von Nyssa eine Enttäuschung. Zwar erwähnt Gregor von Nyssa hin und wieder auch trinitätstheologische Themen. So etwa, wenn er in der achten Homilie die unwandelbare und ewige Physis als wahrhaftigen Vater, eingeborenen Sohn und Heiligen Geist erläutert und dann hinzusetzt, das diese als etwas betrachtet werden, was wirklich zu einer φύσις gehört und bei dem der Unterschied im Bereich der Hypostasen keine Trennung bzw. Entfremdung bewirkt.¹ Auch häuft Gregor an einer anderen Stelle die biblischen Bezeichnungen an, die den Sohn charakterisieren: Er ist ἀπαύγασμα δόξης und χαρακτήρ ὑποστάσεως,² μορφή θεοῦ,³ λόγος ἐν ἁρχῇ und λόγος θεός.⁴ Alle diese Bezeichnungen geben nicht an, was seine Natur ausmacht, sind also nicht selbst das Gold, aber doch immerhin ὁμοιώματα χρυσοῦ – Nachbildungen von Gold, die für die Erkenntnis des Glaubens wichtig sind.⁵ Auch klingt an wenigen Stellen wie ein fernes Echo an, dass es Auseinandersetzungen um die Trinitätslehre gegeben hat. So ist die erste der eben genannten Stellen eingebettet in einen Kontext, in dem es um die Öffnung des reinen Auges (ὁ καθαρός ὀφθαλμός) geht (vgl. die Erwähnung eines der Augen in Ct 4.9). Gregor holt hier etwas aus und unterscheidet zwei Formen der Sehtätigkeit (ὀπτική ἐνέργεια), von denen sich die eine auf die Wahrheit richtet, die andere auf Törichtes (μάταια). Entsprechend ist mit Ct 4.9 die Braut als jemand beschreiben, der sich allein auf den einen konzentriert – und dem werden die τινες gegenübergestellt, die in schlechter Weise mit unterschiedlichen Augen den Einen in viele φύσεις aufteilen. Dies sind die Vielsehenden, die dadurch, dass sie vieles sehen, nichts sehen – sprich die Gotteslehre durch stoffliche Vorstellungen⁶ entstellen. Im Gegensatz dazu sind gerade die, die

1 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 258,2–6).

2 Heb 1.3.

3 Phil 2.6.

4 Jn 1.1–3. *Cant III* (GNO VI 86,6f.).

5 *Cant III* (GNO VI 86,2–5,7–10).

6 Der Begriff φαντασία ist hier pejorativ gebraucht: *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 258,9,12.13), was bei Gregor oft, aber nicht immer der Fall ist, vgl. F. Mann, „Art. φαντασία“, *Lexicon Gregorianum* 9, Leiden 2013, 407–410. Dies ergibt sich insbesondere aus der Zusammenstellung mit μάταιος

nur das Göttliche mit scharfem Blick erfassen, „blind“ im Hinblick auf die Vielheit, also sehend im Hinblick auf das Eine.⁷ Hier sind also die Vertreter einer Trinitätslehre, die nicht die Einheit betonen, als törichte Blinde diskreditiert. Zugrundegelegt wird dabei die Diastase von Einheit und Vielheit – die trinitätstheologischen Gegner, für die nur ausgesagt wird, dass sie die Einheit in viele Naturen aufteilen (also wohl die Eunomianer), bleiben also in dem minderwertigen Bereich der (materiellen, von Einbildungen geprägten und daher in die Irre führenden) Vielheit stecken. An anderer Stelle erwähnt Gregor sogar die αἵρεσις, die kein Material gegen die Wahrheit finden soll, indem sie φυσιολογεῖν betreibt, also ein rationales Nachdenken über die φύσις, wobei der Begriff hier pejorativ gemeint ist, weil er das zu erfassen sucht, was an sich nicht erfassbar ist, nämlich die göttliche φύσις. In dieser Hinsicht würde das φυσιολογεῖν eben eine πολυπραγμοσύνη in Bezug auf das Unerfassbare darstellen.⁸

Solche knappen Bezugnahmen stellen aber keine trinitätstheologische Argumentation dar, blicken nur kurz auf entsprechende Argumentationen und Auseinandersetzungen zurück. Eigentlich trinitätstheologisch argumentierende Passagen, die das Verhältnis von Vater, Sohn und Geist untereinander begrifflich diskutieren oder eine ontologische Bestimmung von Einheit und Dreiheit entwickeln, habe ich in den Hoheliedshomilien schlicht nicht gefunden⁹.

Nun könnte ich meinen Vortrag mit dieser Fehlanzeige an sich bereits beenden – wenn mir nicht auf der Suche nach trinitätstheologischen Passagen einige Abschnitte aufgefallen wären, an denen Gregor die Unerkennbarkeit der οὐσία oder φύσις thematisiert – die auch im Rahmen der Trinitätslehre eine wichtige Rolle spielt.¹⁰ Wie Gregor diese Abschnitte einsetzt und welche tri-

(*Cant* VIII [GNO VI 257,15; 258,18]), vgl. ἐμματαῖάζω (*Cant* VIII [GNO VI 258,14]) und mit Komposita von πλανᾶω (vgl. πλανᾶσμαι *Cant* VIII [GNO VI 257,15]; ἐπιπλανᾶσμαι *Cant* VIII [GNO VI 258,12]).

7 *Cant* VIII (GNO VI 258,7–20).

8 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 339,16–19). Auf diese Stelle weist F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993, 312 f. hin, er bemerkt dazu ebd. 313: „Hier liegt eine der wenigen Stellen aus den *Cant Hom* vor, in denen eine polemische Frontstellung gegen andere Theologen bzw. Theologien offen zutage tritt“.

9 Hierfür sind Stellen, die in traditioneller Weise das Zusammenwirken von Vater, Sohn und Geist beschreiben, wie z. B. das Bild mit dem vom Vater abgeschickten, in Geist getauchten Sohnes-Pfeil in *Cant* IV (GNO VI 127,10–17), auf das S. Coakley, „Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of *The Song*“, in: Ead., *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa* (ed.), Oxford, 2003, 1–13, 10 und M. Laird, „Under Solomon's Tutelage. The Education of Desire in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*“, in: S. Coakley, *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Oxford 2003, 77–95, 88 f., hinweisen, wenig aussagekräftig.

10 M. Canévet, „Exégèse et théologie dans les traités spirituels de Grégoire de Nyssa“, in: M. Harl (éd.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes*

nitätstheologischen Implikationen sich daraus ergeben, will ich im folgenden genauer erläutern.

Die Abschnitte, die die Unfassbarkeit des göttlichen Wesens beschreiben, sind unterschiedlich gelagert. Vier verschiedene Akzente möchte ich nennen:

I

Unfassbarkeit im Zusammenhang der Namenslehre. Bei der Auslegung von Ct 1,3 (μύρον ἐκκενωθὲν ὄνομά σοι) entwickelt Gregor den Gedanken, dass die göttliche δύναμις bzw. φύσις¹¹ menschlichen Erwägungen¹² unzugänglich ist,¹³ anhand der Namenslehre (auch veranlasst durch das Wort ὄνομα in Ct 1,3). Die ἀόριστος φύσις kann nicht durch eine ὀνομαστική σημασία umfasst werden, und zwar genauer kann sie dies nicht δι' ἀκριβείας, also in einem genauen, präzise erfassenden Sinn.¹⁴ Jedes Wort (ῥῆμα neben ὄνομα) vermag auch dann, wenn es etwas Großes und Gottgeziemendes zu beinhalten scheint, nicht das Seiende selbst (hier = Gott) zu bezeichnen.¹⁵ Dass Worte nicht das Seiende treffen, ist zunächst ein Grundsatz, der ganz allgemein zu gelten scheint – also auch außerhalb der Gotteslehre. Hier wird er gleich auf die göttliche Natur bezogen. Dies zeigt sich auch an der positiven Gegenüberstellung. Unsere Vernunft stellt Vermutungen auf (καταστοχάζεται)¹⁶ gleichsam aus gewissen Spuren und Funken,¹⁷ wobei sie von dem, was sich erfassen lässt (die Spuren), gleichsam im Analogieschlussverfahren (ἐκ τινος ἀναλογίας) auf das Unfassbare schließt (εἰκάζων).¹⁸ Die Bezeichnungen entsprechen also nicht dem Salböl selbst, son-

du colloque de Chevetogne (22–26 septembre 1969), Leiden 1971, 144–168, 144 macht auf die theologischen Abschnitte im Hoheliedkommentar aufmerksam, die sie vom Gesamtaufbau her erklären möchte.

11 Gregor wechselt hier zwischen diesen beiden Begriffen: ἡ θεία δύναμις (*Cant* I [GNO VI 36,14]) und ἡ ἀόριστος φύσις (*Cant* I [GNO VI 36,17]).

12 Λογισμοί meint hier die vernünftigen, begrifflich fassbaren Überlegungen.

13 *Cant* I (GNO VI 36,13–15). Gregor sieht dies als Intention der Seele bzw. Braut an und als einen erneuten Hinweis darauf, dass die Seele hier sich mit der ὑψηλοτέρα φιλοσοφία befasst (*Cant* I [GNO VI 36,12 f.]).

14 *Cant* I (GNO VI 36,15–17). Vgl. F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 293 f.

15 *Cant* I (GNO VI 36,18–20).

16 Vgl. M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nyssa et l'herméneutique biblique. Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu*, Paris 1983, 53 f.

17 Ἐναυσμα meint die Glut, die noch übrigbleibt, bzw. die noch glimmende und funkenversprühende Asche, daher auch übertragen: „Spur, Überbleibsel, Rest“, vgl. F. Mann, „Art. ἔναυσμα“, *Lexicon Gregorianum* 3, Leiden 2001, 226 f.

18 Εἰκάζω bezeichnet das „Für-wahrscheinlich-Halten“, also die mutmaßende, vermutende Annahme.

dem einem entleerten Salbölgefäß, in dem noch Spuren des Duftes des Salböls enthalten sind. Angewandt auf die Gotteslehre bedeutet dies: Was Gott κατ' οὐσίαν eigentlich ist, bleibt verborgen (es ist ὑπὲρ πάντων [...] ὄνομα τε καὶ νόημα). Doch kann man von Gott im All (τὸ πᾶν) überall wundersame Wirkungen (θαύματα) beobachten, von denen aus man Eigenschaften Gottes nennen kann (quasi analog zur Qualität des Salböls in dem entleerten Gefäß).¹⁹ Dabei nennt Gregor nicht nur allgemeine Eigenschaften der Gotteslehre (σοφός, δυνατός, ἀγαθός, ἅγιος, μακάριος, αἰδιός), sondern auch Bezeichnungen, die in besonderer Weise Christus zukommen, nämlich χριτής und σωτήρ. Bereits mit dem Bezug auf Phil 2.6 (ὑπὲρ πάντων ὄνομα) war ein christologischer Bezug angedeutet worden, so dass undeutlich ist, ob hier allgemein von der Gottheit oder spezieller von der Gottheit Christi die Rede ist.

II

Unfassbarkeit im Zusammenhang der Möglichkeit menschlichen Denkens überhaupt. Wesentlich grundlegender auf das Denken überhaupt bezieht Gregor diesen Gedanken bei der Auslegung von Ct 1.11. Dies ist der Abschnitt, der bereits oben erwähnt wurde, in dem sich die Anhäufung christologischer Begriffe aus Heb 1.3 Phil 2.6 und Jn 1.1–3 findet, die eben ὁμοιώματα χριστοῦ (so der Terminus aus Ct 1.11) darstellen, nicht das Gold selbst.²⁰ Ct 1.11 erwähnt außerdem noch Silber, das in die Goldimitationen eingepunktet ist, so dass Gregor auch die Erwähnung von Silberpunkten noch erklärt.²¹ Seine Erklärung beginnt mit der allgemeinen Aussage, dass jede Lehre²² über die ἄρρητος φύσις nur Goldimitationen sind, selbst wenn sie einen gottgeziemenden und hohen Gedanken aufweisen.²³ So weit stimmt die Erläuterung Gregors noch mit der ersten über die Unzulänglichkeit von Namen überein. Dazu passt auch, dass Gregor auf Paulus verweist, der zwar im Paradies unaussprechliche Geheimnisse erfahren hat, diese aber nicht aussprechen kann. Dementsprechend sind

19 Vgl. E. Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa. Gregors Kritik am Gottesbegriff der klassischen Metaphysik*, Göttingen 1966, 191.

20 *Cant* III (GNO VI 86,2–6).

21 *Cant* III (GNO VI 86,10–12).

22 Διδασκαλία meint meistens den Vorgang des Unterrichtens (vgl. F. Mann, „Art. διδασκαλία“, *Lexicon Gregorianum* 2, Leiden 2000, 393–396), kann aber auch die Lehre selbst in inhaltlicher Hinsicht bezeichnen.

23 *Cant* III (GNO VI 85,15–19). Erneut sagt Gregor, dass die Bezeichnungen das Gemeinte nicht δι' ἀκριβείας angeben; *Cant* III (GNO VI 85,19f.).

auch die Bezeichnungen Christi in der Bibel eben nur Goldimitationen, nicht das Gold selbst. Sie sind Silber (wozu Gregor auch Pr 11,20 heranzieht).²⁴ Diesen Gedanken verallgemeinert Gregor jedoch noch, wenn er sagt, dass die göttliche Natur nicht nur gedanklich-begrifflich nicht ausdrückbar ist, sondern oberhalb jeden erfassenden Denkens liegt (ὑπέρκειται πάσης καταληπτικῆς διανοίας). Auch der Gedanke (νόημα) ist nur Goldimitation, nicht das Gold selbst. Anstelle des εἶδος entsteht in der Seele nur eine schattenhafte ἔμφρασις τις, und zwar durch einen Spiegel und durch ein Rätsel (δι' ἐσόπτρου καὶ δι' αἰνίγματος).²⁵ Es ergeben sich also drei Stufen: a) das, was eigentlich über Gott zu denken ist, die θεία κατανόησις, b) das, was jedes (scil. menschliche) Denken, die διάνοια, vermag, sie erreicht den Bereich des Göttlichen nicht, und c) die Möglichkeit, das von der διάνοια Gedachte, sprachlich auszudrücken.²⁶ Daraus ergibt sich für die Seele die Aufgabe, die jede Vernunft übersteigende²⁷ Natur διὰ πίστεως in sich zu beheimaten.²⁸ Dies führt Gregor in eine paraphrasierende Wiedergabe von Ct 1,11 über.²⁹ Diese fällt insofern hinter dem eben Gesagten zurück, als hier die Goldimitationen doch wieder auf die Beschränktheit der ῥήματα bezogen wird.³⁰ Als Beispiel wird schließlich Paulus genannt, der diesen Prozeß, durch Glauben in sich die göttliche Natur zu beheimaten, schon geschafft hat.³¹

Interessant an dem Abschnitt ist, dass Gregor nur von der göttlichen Natur allgemein spricht, für die er verschiedene Bezeichnungen nennt,³² dass er dann im Konkreten aber christologische Bezeichnungen als Beispiele für die Goldimitationen nennt. Nicht konsequent durchgehalten ist die Frage, ob es die Begrenztheit der ῥήματα oder die der διάνοια ist, die dazu führt, dass die göttliche Natur transzendent bleibt. Dem wird der Glaube als entscheidender Zugang gegenübergestellt, mit dem die Seele die göttliche Natur in sich beheimatet bzw. ansiedelt (ἐνοικίζω).³³ In der paraphrasierenden Wiedergabe wird

24 *Cant* III (GNO VI 85,20–86,12).

25 *Cant* III (GNO VI 86,12–18).

26 *Cant* III (GNO VI 87,2–5). Zur Unterscheidung von Sprache und Gedanken bei Gregor vgl. M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nyssa et l'herméneutique biblique*, 35 f.

27 Vgl. Phil 4,7.

28 *Cant* III (GNO VI 87,5–8).

29 *Cant* III (GNO VI 87,8–17).

30 So explizit in *Cant* III (GNO VI 87,12–15).

31 *Cant* III (GNO VI 87,17–88,6).

32 Es sind die folgenden: ἡ ἄρρητος φύσις (*Cant* III [GNO VI 85,16]), τὸ ὑπὲρ ἔννοιαν ἀγαθόν (*Cant* III [GNO VI 85,20]), θεός (*Cant* III [GNO VI 86,1]), ἡ θεία φύσις (*Cant* III [GNO VI 86,13]), ἡ πάντα νοῦν ὑπερέχουσα φύσις (*Cant* III [GNO VI 87,7 f.]), ἡ ἀλήθεια (*Cant* III [GNO VI 87,10]), vgl. *Cant* III [GNO VI 86,8]).

33 Vgl. F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 295.

dies wiederum auf das konkrete Bild, also auf den Bräutigam zurückbezogen, ohne dass geklärt wäre, wie sich das zu den Aussagen über die göttliche Natur insgesamt verhält.

III

Unerreichbarkeit aufgrund von unveränderlicher Unendlichkeit: Bei der Auslegung von Ct 2.13 (genauer 2.13c) teilt Gregor die Gesamtwirklichkeit in zwei Bereiche ein: a) den Bereich der seligen, ewigen, alle Vernunft überschreitenden Natur, also Gott, der alles in der Welt umfasst, selbst aber von keiner Grenze umfasst wird.³⁴ Eine lange Aufzählung schließt dann alle umschreibenden Kategorien wie Zeit, Ort, Farbe, Gestalt, Form, Masse, Beschaffenheit, Lage im Raum aus – und zwar gilt dies für die reale, sprachliche und gedankliche Ebene (ὄνομα ἢ πράγμα ἢ νόημα).³⁵ Die Eigenschaft, von keinem Maß begrenzt zu werden, bedeutet insbesondere, dass alles, was an Gutem im Hinblick auf sie gedacht wird,³⁶ εἰς ἄπειρόν τε καὶ ἄόριστον voranschreitet – was eo ipso alles Böse ausschließt (da das Böse dann jeweils die Grenze des Guten wäre).³⁷ Diese unbegrenzte, unendliche und daher gute Natur beschreibt Gregor denn auch als die ἡ ἀπλή καὶ καθαρά καὶ μονοειδής καὶ ἄτρεπτος καὶ ἀναλλοίωτος φύσις.³⁸ Dem stellt er b) die τρεπτή φύσις gegenüber, die die Möglichkeit hat, sich für eine der beiden Richtungen zu entscheiden und bei der das Gute jeweils durch das Böse begrenzt wird (analog ist es dann mit anderen Beschäftigungen der Seele, wo jeweils die Gegensätze sich gegenseitig begrenzen).³⁹ Diese Gegenüberstellung nutzt Gregor, um zu zeigen, dass der Aufstieg der Seele unendlich ist. Denn wenn die menschliche Seele zur Teilhabe an der unveränderlichen, unendlichen Natur gezogen wird, bleibt der Abstand zu ihr immer gleich groß (scil. nämlich ebenfalls unendlich). Die Seele wächst und nimmt zu, wird größer und bleibt in diesem Prozess nirgends stecken, doch verringert das den Abstand

34 *Cant V* (GNO VI 157,14–16).

35 *Cant V* (GNO VI 157,16–19).

36 Der Ausdruck τὸ περὶ αὐτὴν νοούμενον (*Cant V* [GNO VI 157,20]) signalisiert deutlich, dass das so Gedachte nicht die göttliche Natur selbst betrifft, sondern deren Umfeld, eben um sie herum angenommen wird.

37 *Cant V* (GNO VI 157,20–158,1).

38 *Cant V* (GNO VI 158,8–12). Damit tauchen die beiden zentralen Argumentationsmuster aus der Eunomiuskontroverse, die E. Mühlhberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa*, 118–126, analysiert hat, gemeinsam auf.

39 *Cant V* (GNO VI 158,1–7). Zur Bedeutung der Veränderlichkeit für Gregors Theologie vgl. J. Daniélou, *L'être et le temps chez Grégoire de Nyssa*, Leiden 1970, 103–114.

zur unendlichen Natur eben nicht (scil. da die Seele veränderlich und endlich bleibt).⁴⁰ Die Bezeichnungen für das Göttliche lassen keine trinitätstheologische Differenzierung und auch keinen christologischen Bezug erkennen, neben den einheitlichen Beschreibungen der göttlichen φύσις tauchen Neutra auf wie τὸ κρεῖττον, τὸ ὑπερέχον oder τὸ μετεχόμενον ἀγαθόν.⁴¹ Erst anschließend bei der Schilderung des Aufstiegs wird die Braut παρὰ τοῦ λόγου stufenhaft nach oben geführt,⁴² so dass sich auch hier die Frage ergibt, wie sich die unendliche Natur bzw. das Gute schlechthin zum Bräutigam verhält.

IV

In der sechsten Homilie schickt Gregor der Erläuterung des Textes eine allgemeine Betrachtung voran,⁴³ die noch einmal eigene Akzente setzt. Die Wirklichkeit (ἡ τῶν ὄντων φύσις) lässt sich in zwei Bereiche einteilen, den materiell-sinnlich-Wahrnehmbaren (αἰσθητόν) und den intelligiblen (νοητόν). Letzterer ist nicht nur sinnlich nicht wahrnehmbar, sondern auch ἄπειρόν τε καὶ ἄόριστον.⁴⁴ Während der sinnlich-wahrnehmbare, stoffliche Bereich durch Quantität und Qualität, Masse, Gestalt, Oberfläche, Aussehen charakterisiert und insoweit auch begrenzt wird (weil sich die Einbildungskraft nichts ohne diese Eigenschaften vorstellen kann), ist das Intelligible rein von einer solchen Umfassung und entflieht somit jeder Grenze.⁴⁵ Das Intelligible nun ist im Sinne einer weiteren Unterteilung wiederum in zwei Bereiche einzuteilen, nämlich zum einen in die ungeschaffene Natur des Schöpfers, zum anderen in die intelligible Natur, die geschaffen ist und somit immer zum ersten Grund des Seien-

40 *Cant V* (GNO VI 158,12–19). Dementsprechend nimmt Gregor keine unio mystica als Aufgehen der Seele in Gott an, vgl. u. a. W. Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, Wiesbaden 1955, 213 f.; A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition. From Plato to Denys*, Oxford 1981, 81.89. Dementsprechend ist auch die Vorstellung einer Vergöttlichung, die nicht als Teilhabe der endlichen Natur zu verstehen ist, bei Gregor nicht gegeben, vgl. E. Mühlberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa*, 162–165 (auch gegen die Einwände von M. Canévet, „Art. Grégoire de Nysse“, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 6, Paris 1967, coll. 971–1011, 999 f.).

41 *Cant V* (GNO VI 158,14.16.17).

42 *Cant V* (GNO VI 158,19–159,4).

43 Cf. *Cant VI* (GNO VI 173,3–5). Vgl. A. Meredith, „The Idea of God in Gregory of Nyssa“, in: H.R. Drobner – C. Klock (eds.), *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der christlichen Spätantike*, Leiden 1990, 127–147, 139.

44 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 173,7–11).

45 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 173,11–174,1).

den zurückschaut.⁴⁶ Diese geschaffene, geistig-intelligible Natur (also wohl die λογικά, in erster Linie die Engel) bleibt dauerhaft an die Schöpfernatur gebunden, sie besteht nur durch die Teilhabe an dem Überragenden und wird somit gleichsam dauerhaft geschaffen.⁴⁷ Ihre Existenz ist insofern unendlich, als ihre Veränderung zum Größeren, ihr Wachstum unbegrenzt und unendlich ist. Das jeweils gegenwärtige Gute ist immer nur der Anfang eines darüberliegenden und größeren Guten – was Gregor mit dem Hinweis auf die Richtigkeit von Phil 3,13 als ἐπέκτασις deutet.⁴⁸ Diese Unterscheidung innerhalb der intelligiblen Natur ist mit der in der fünften Homilie genannten durchaus vereinbar, nur dass hier es gleichsam ein konstituierender Faktor der intelligiblen geschaffenen Natur ist, dass sie zum Größeren aufsteigt. Dabei ist nicht ganz deutlich, ob hier nun wirklich nur die Engel gemeint sind oder auch die Seele (für die also nicht die Veränderlichkeit und die Begrenzung durch das Böse angeführt werden, sondern die fortdauernde ἐπέκτασις als Wesensmerkmal). Das Verhältnis zwischen den beiden Naturen wird nur sehr ungenau und allgemein angegeben, es ist ein Hinschauen der geschaffenen Natur auf ihren Ursprung, es ist μετουσία, ein ständiges Geschaffenwerden. Eine Differenzierung innerhalb der ungeschaffenen Natur (etwa im Hinblick auf Schöpfung oder Erlösung) wird hier nirgends angedeutet.

Aus diesen Passagen ergibt sich die Frage, wie diese allgemeinen Aussagen über das Göttliche bzw. die göttliche Natur sich zu der in der Einzelauslegung dominierenden Figur des Bräutigams verhalten. Dass der Bräutigam nun explizit Christus meint, ergibt sich aus verschiedenen Stellen, an denen Gregor über die bloßen Assoziationen hinausgeht und eine explizite Identifikation des Bräutigams mit Christus herstellt.⁴⁹ Dazu ein paar Beispiele: Bei der Erklärung der κλήνη aus Ct 1,16 paraphrasiert Gregor den Sinn des Bibelverses und nimmt dabei deutlich Bezug auf die Inkarnationslehre. Durch die Begriffe ἡ τοῦ δούλου

46 Vgl. A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 80f.; A.A. Mosshammer, „The Created and the Uncreated in Gregory of Nyssa *Contra Eunomium* I 270–295 (GNO I, 105–113)“, in: M. Brugarolas (ed.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium I. An English Translation with Supporting Studies*, Leiden 2018, 384–411, 404–406.

47 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 174,1–8). Vgl. D.L. Balás, *Μετουσία Θεού. Man's Participation in God's Perfection according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*, Rome 1966, 135.

48 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 174,8–16).

49 Die Identifikation des νυμφίος mit Christus (vgl. z. B. L.F. Mateo-Seco, „La Cristología del *In Canticum Canticorum* de Gregorio de Nisa“, in: H.R. Drobner – C. Klock [Hg.], *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der christlichen Spätantike*, 173–190, 174; F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 263–265) ist in dem Text des Hoheliedkommentars keineswegs so explizit präsent, wie man erwarten würde. K. Bjerre-Aspegren, *Bräutigam, Sonne und Mutter. Studien zu einigen Gottesmetaphern bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Lund 1977, 64–70; 97–103, klärt diese Frage nicht.

μορφή und ἡ περιβολή τοῦ σώματος⁵⁰ wird dieser Bezug klar hergestellt. Explizit wird dies, weil Gregor anschließend auf 2 Cor 11,2 hinweist, wo die Adressaten als reine Jungfrau dem einen Mann, Christus, zugeführt wird; durch die Parallelisierung der Jungfrau mit der Braut des Hohelieds und des Bräutigams mit Christus wird die Vereinigung Christi mit der Kirche ausgedrückt. Dies wird zusätzlich mit Eph 5,32 belegt, wo ebenfalls explizit Christus genannt wird.⁵¹ Schlußfolgernd hält Gregor fest, dass der Herr nicht nur νυμφίος, sondern auch οἰκοδόμος ist.⁵²

In der Auslegung von Ct 2,14 geht Gregor auf den Fels ein, den er auch als ἡ εὐαγγελικὴ πέτρα bezeichnet und explizit mit Christus identifiziert.⁵³ Zugleich wird Ct 2,14–15 als Dialog zwischen Braut und Bräutigam gedeutet,⁵⁴ so dass auch von hier aus die Identifikation des Bräutigams mit Christus deutlich wird. Dies wird dadurch verstärkt, dass die Bitte der Braut an den Bräutigam auf die Inkarnation bezogen wird: Das Verlangen der Braut, das Gesicht des Bräutigams zu sehen, wird gedeutet als Begehren der διὰ σαρκὸς θεοφάνεια. Hinzu kommen explizite Bezugnahmen auf Jn 1,14 und 1 Tim 3,16 und der Vergleich mit dem Nunc dimittis.⁵⁵ Der Bräutigam wird somit eindeutig als der Fleisch gewordene Logos identifiziert.

Bei der Auslegung von Ct 4,8 wird die Aufforderung an die Braut, sich von den Löwen und Leoparden zu entfernen, als Aussage des ἀγαθὸς νυμφίος bezeichnet.⁵⁶ Dies wird dann wenig später aufgegriffen, wobei der Bräutigam durch ὁ λόγος ersetzt wird.⁵⁷ Dass ὁ λόγος hier nicht schlicht den Bibeltext meint (bzw. die Rede des Bräutigams)⁵⁸, wird einige Zeilen später deutlich, weil hier die φωνὴ τοῦ λόγου charakterisiert wird: Sie ist immer eine δυνάμειος φωνή, wie sich seit ihrem ersten Erklängen bei der Erschaffung des Lichts gezeigt hat.⁵⁹ Der Bezug auf Gn 1,3 und die Schöpfung lässt die Identifikation des Bräutigams mit dem Schöpferlogos eindeutig werden.

Das Proömium von *Homilie* 9 setzt mit einer ausführlichen Bezugnahme auf Col 3,1–4 ein und bezieht das dort genannte Sterben und Auferstehen mit Chri-

50 Cant IV (GNO VI 108,3.6f.).

51 Cant IV (GNO VI 108,12–18).

52 Cant IV (GNO VI 109,3f.).

53 Cant V (GNO VI 163,9.13.14.19).

54 Cant V (GNO VI 163,12; 164,16f.).

55 Cant V (GNO VI 164,5–12).

56 Cant VIII (GNO VI 252,3–8).

57 Cant VIII (GNO VI 252,10.17).

58 Dies ist der Fall in Cant VIII (GNO VI 252,6).

59 Cant VIII (GNO VI 253,8–12).

stus⁶⁰ auf den Logos, der als Sprecher von Ct 4.10–15 eingeführt wird.⁶¹ Der Logos wird dann wenig später explizit mit dem Bräutigam identifiziert.⁶² Dies greift Gregor dann bei der Erläuterung von Ct 4.13–15 auch wieder auf, indem er sagt, dass die Bezeichnungen als Schwester und νύμφη τοῦ λόγου die Seele mit dem νυμφίος verbinden. Der anschließende Hinweis auf Eph 3.6 verstärkt diesen christologischen Bezug zusätzlich.⁶³ Zu Ct 5.3 kann Gregor schlicht parallelisieren: ἴδωμεν δὲ καὶ πῶς ὑπακούει τῷ λόγῳ ἢ νύμφῃ, πῶς ἀνοίγει τῷ νυμφίῳ τὴν εἴσοδον.⁶⁴ Deutlicher kann die Identifikation zwischen Logos-Christus und dem Bräutigam kaum werden. Und die hier genannten Stellen ließen sich sicher durch weitere Beispiele aus anderen Homilien ergänzen.

Zugleich gibt es aber Passagen, in denen Gregor quasi lautlos von Gott zu Christus oder umgekehrt wechselt.⁶⁵ Diese Stellen sind für uns trinitätstheologisch besonders interessant, weil sich hieraus die Frage ergibt, wie sich Christus (bzw. der Bräutigam) zu Gott verhält.

Ein Beispiel für eine solche unklare Vermischung von Gott, Göttlichem, Christus bzw. Logos und dem Bräutigam befindet sich bereits im Proömium der ersten Homilie. Hier wird als Thema des Hohelieds die Vorbereitung einer Hochzeit verstanden, gemeint sei die τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ψυχῆς ἢ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἀνάκρασις.⁶⁶ Die Seele, die in den Proverbien Sohn und Weisheit genannt wird, wird hier als Bräutigam dargestellt, damit deutlich wird, dass der Mensch für Gott zur reinen Jungfrau wird⁶⁷ und mit dem Herrn verbunden und ein Geist (scil. mit ihm) wird.⁶⁸ Unklar ist dabei, wie die drei Begriffe ὁ θεός, ὁ κύριος und νυμφίος sich zueinander genau verhalten. Aber da der Bräutigam auf die Bildebene gehört, könnte mit θεός Gott-Vater gemeint sein. Der Bezug von κύριος im alttestamentlichen Kontext könnte in dieselbe Richtung weisen, doch die Ver-

60 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 262,1–12).

61 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 262,20).

62 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 263,12).

63 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 279,9–13). Vgl. dann die explizit christologischen Aussagen in *Cant IX* (GNO VI 280,7–12).

64 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 327,8f.).

65 W. Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, 209 spricht davon, dass „fortgesetzt ‚Gottes‘- und ‚Christus‘-Mystik ineinander geschoben werden“. Dieses „Schwanken“ (ebd. 209 Anm. 1) ist richtig beobachtet, auch wenn Völkers Begriff von Mystik nicht übernommen werden kann.

66 *Cant I* (GNO VI 22,16–23,1).

67 Der Bezug von ἐκ νυμφίου (*Cant I* [GNO VI 23,3]) ist ein Sprachspiel: Aus dem Sohn, der in den Proverbien ermahnt wird und der selbst als Bräutigam in Frage kommt, wird nun die Braut.

68 *Cant I* (GNO VI 23,1–6).

bindung mit dem Verb κολλάομαι und der Vorstellung, dann ἐν πνεύμα zu werden, entstammt 1 Cor 6.17, wo κύριος deutlich Christus meint. Insofern bleibt der Text hier in einer merkwürdigen Schwebelage zwischen einem Bezug auf Gott allgemein (eventuell sogar parallel zu dem unpersönlichen τὸ θεῖον aus dem Vorsatz) und einem Bezug spezifisch auf Christus. Christus und Gott scheinen miteinander zu verschwimmen.

Ähnlich ist es an anderen Stellen, so etwa bei der Auslegung von Ct 1.4. Der christologische Bezug des νυμφίος scheint zunächst deutlich zu sein, wenn die Aussagen des Bräutigams mit denen der Weisheit⁶⁹ erläutert werden.⁷⁰ Die Sehnsucht nach dem Bräutigam wird dann mit Hos 11.10 erläutert: Die sich sehnenenden Seelen ziehen hinter dem κύριος ὁ θεός her.⁷¹ Könnte man hier noch an eine christologische Deutung des κύριος ὁ θεός denken (die dann auch dazu passen würde, dass das Erreichen des Sehnsuchtsziels als Hineinführen in das Brautgemach des Königs beschrieben wird), so wird dies dann jedoch erläutert als Durchdringen der βάθνη τοῦ θεοῦ⁷² und den unaussprechlichen Worten, die Paulus im Paradies erfuhr.⁷³ Damit wird das Ziel des Sehns nach eben doch nicht christologisch gedeutet, sondern in einem umfassenderen Sinn auf Gott bezogen.

Die Erläuterung von Ct 3.1–4 beginnt damit, dass Gregor relativ ausführlich den bisherigen Aufstieg der Seele rekapituliert und die verschiedenen Bilder mitsamt ihren Deutungen noch einmal Revue passieren lässt.⁷⁴ Dabei wird der christologische Bezug des νυμφίος besonders deutlich, weil Gregor auf die Inkarnation Bezug nimmt (Der Logos steigt herab τῇ ὑλικῇ τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου σώματος φύσει συσκιαζόμενος).⁷⁵ Als vorläufiges Etappenziel, das dann wiederum zum Ausgangspunkt für den weiteren Aufstieg wird, nennt Gregor dann aber das ἰδεῖν τὸν θεόν.⁷⁶ Und wenige Zeilen später wird der Kontakt der Seele direkt auf Gott bezogen: ὁ τε γὰρ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γίνεται καὶ πάλιν εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἡ ψυχὴ μετοικίζεται.⁷⁷ Dies wird dann direkt auf Ct 2.16 bezogen, was sich wiederum auf den Bräutigam bezieht.⁷⁸ Auch hier verschwindet die Gestalt des

69 Pr 8.17–21.

70 Cant I (GNO VI 39,5–9).

71 Cant I (GNO VI 39,9–11).

72 1 Cor 2.10.

73 Cant I (GNO VI 39,19–40,12).

74 Cant VI (GNO VI 175,1–178,19).

75 Cant VI (GNO VI 176,11–14).

76 Cant VI (GNO VI 178,21f.). Vgl. M.-B. von Stritzky, *Zum Problem der Erkenntnis bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Münster 1973, 96.

77 Cant VI (GNO VI 179,6f.).

78 Cant VI (GNO VI 179,7–10).

Bräutigams also einerseits in der Bezeichnung Gott, taucht dann andererseits aber ebenso unvermittelt auch wieder auf.

Eine *συγγένεια* zwischen einer auf Gott bezogenen und einer christologischen Auslegung findet sich auch bei der Auslegung der Nacht aus Ct 5.2. Hier zieht Gregor seine Auslegung des *γνόφος* aus Ex 20.21 aus der Vita Moysis heran und beschreibt, wie der Eintritt in das Dunkel das Erblicken Gottes bzw. der Eintritt ins Adyton ist.⁷⁹ Danach entfaltet er als paralleles Geschehen den Aufstieg der Seele, die dem Bräutigam nachts die Tür öffnet.⁸⁰ Die Schau Gottes (im Dunkeln) und die Begegnung mit Christus gehen nahtlos ineinander über. Dies ist auch schon in der Einleitung zu greifen, wo die *τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιφάνεια* unmittelbar mit dem Hereinlassen des Logos verbunden wird.⁸¹ Der Wechsel zwischen Gott und dem Logos geschieht so nahtlos, dass man an eine Identität denkt. Und genau auf derselben Linie liegt es, wenn Gregor den unendlichen Aufstieg der Seele als Schauen auf Gott bezeichnet⁸² und dies dann unmittelbar durch die Bilderwelt des Hohelieds erläutert und dabei den *νυμφίος* als Logos erläutert.⁸³ Gott und Logos sind gleichermaßen die Richtung des Aufstiegs, ohne dass man hier einen Unterschied bemerken würde.

Demgegenüber gibt es nur wenige Stellen, an denen deutlich zwischen Gott und dem Bräutigam unterschieden wird, etwa wenn bei der Auslegung von Ct 1.8 die Tatsache, dass die Braut noch nicht die Stimme des Bräutigams gehört hat, damit begründet wird, dass *ὁ θεός* etwas Besseres vorgesehen hat – Bräutigam und Gott sind hier deutlich voneinander unterschieden, der Bräutigam scheint fast ein Mittel zum Zweck zu sein, das Gott einsetzt. Doch sind Stellen wie diese selten.

Somit bleibt als die entscheidende Frage. Wie ist es zu erklären, dass Gregor Gott und den Logos so ineinander übergehen lässt, dass nicht deutlich ist, ob es sich um eine einzige Größe handelt, in der es keine Unterscheidungen gibt?

Hierfür könnte man mehrere Antwortmöglichkeiten erwägen.

Möglichkeit A: Es handelt sich um Texte, die von der Gattung her so wenig an Trinitätslehre interessiert sind, dass es schlichtweg außerhalb der Aufmerksamkeit Gregors liegt, Gott und den Logos einander zuzuordnen und auch für die Deutung des Bräutigams einen klaren Bezug (etwa auf die Hypostase des Sohnes) zu entwerfen. Ich halte diese Lösung für wenig befriedigend, weil sie

79 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 322,3–323,9).

80 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 323,10–327,7).

81 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 320,2–5).

82 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 366,11): ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὁρώσα ψυχή.

83 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 366,23–367,9).

annimmt, dass Gregor die Trinitätslehre bisweilen so aus dem Blick verliert, dass sich sein Denken gleichsam von selbst antitrinitarisch verhält.

Möglichkeit B: Gregor hat tatsächlich eine Tendenz in seiner Trinitätslehre, die Unterschiede zwischen den Hypostasen nicht zu betonen, sondern die Einheitlichkeit der Trinität und ihres Wirkens hervorzuheben. Hierin könnte man einerseits einen Unterschied zu Basilius sehen, dessen Denken viel stärker von dem freilich unlöslichen Zusammenwirken der drei Hypostasen ausgeht,⁸⁴ andererseits könnte man versucht sein, die These einer latenten Nähe zu und Bemühung um Markell im Hintergrund zu sehen.⁸⁵ Allerdings wäre dann die Frage, wie sich dieses Ergebnis zu den bewusst trinitätstheologischen Schriften verhält – eventuell ergäbe sich hier als Resultat die Annahme, dass Gregors Denken gerade im Hinblick auf seinen Gottesbegriff in sich inkohärent ist.

Möglichkeit C: Es gibt einen inhaltlichen Grund dafür, dass Gott und Logos so ineinander verschwimmen können. Eine solche Annahme würde davon ausgehen, dass Gregor zwar bei den Hoheliedhomilien in der Tat keine trinitätstheologischen Interessen verfolgt, dass aber seine trinitätstheologischen Grundeinsichten latent vorhanden und auch spürbar sind.⁸⁶

84 Vgl. V.H. Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea. Sein Weg vom Homöusianer zum Neonizäner*, Göttingen 1996, 325 f.

85 Vgl. R. Hübner, „Gregor von Nyssa und Markell von Ankyra“, in: M. Harl (éd.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du colloque de Chevetogne (22–26 septembre 1969)*, Leiden 1971, 199–229, 206–210.

86 S. Coakley, „Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of *The Song*“, 7, benennt als Ziel „that we consider coming to Gregory’s polemical tracts on the Trinity with our eyes already on *The Song*.“ Historisch eindeutig ist, dass der Hoheliedkommentar (vgl. J.B. Cahill, „The Date and Setting of Gregory of Nyssa’s *Commentary on the Song of Songs*“, *JThS* NS 32 [1981] 447–460, 448 f.; F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 32) genauso wie vermutlich auch die *Vita Moysis* (vgl. T. Böhm, *Theoria – Unendlichkeit – Aufstieg. Philosophische Implikationen zu De vita Moysis von Gregor von Nyssa*, Leiden 1996, 146 f.) deutlich nach der Eunomiuskontroverse geschrieben ist, so dass man die Möglichkeit einer Entwicklung von Gregors Denken auf jeden Fall in Rechnung stellen sollte. Allerdings ist in der Tat ebenso nach den gemeinsamen Grundlinien zu fragen, wie es ja in der Forschung auch erfolgt ist. Der Anspruch von S. Coakley („Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of *The Song*“, 5) nun endlich die Konzentration auf Ad Ablabium, das Beispiel der drei Männer und die Trennung von dogmatischen und exegetischen Werken aufzugeben, ist angesichts der Beiträge von E. Mühlenberg (*Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa. Gregors Kritik am Gottesbegriff der klassischen Metaphysik*, Göttingen 1966), M. Canévet (*Grégoire de Nyssa et l’herméneutique biblique. Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu*, Paris 1983), T. Böhm (*Theoria – Unendlichkeit – Aufstieg. Philosophische Implikationen zu De vita Moysis von Gregor von Nyssa*, Leiden 1996) oder F. Dünzl (*Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993), wenig überzeugend. Zu Ad Ablabium vgl. neben L. Ayres, „On not Three People: The Fundamental Themes of Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology as seen in To Ablabius: On not Three

Bei der Überlegung, wie inhaltliche Gründe aussehen könnten, die zu der beobachtbaren Schweben Gott/Logos führen, ist es gut, einige Grundmomente des Aufstiegs zu betrachten. Der Dialog zwischen Braut und dem Geliebten/Gesuchten im Hohelied gibt den Anlass, den Aufstieg als Handeln des Bräutigams bzw. Logos an der Seele darzustellen. Der Bräutigam/Logos führt, zieht, lenkt, leitet die Seele bzw. Kirche. Insofern ist die Aufstiegstheologie der Hoheliedhomilien auch eine Gnadenlehre.⁸⁷ Der Bräutigam/Logos ist aber nicht nur das Subjekt, das an der Seele handelt, sondern zugleich das Objekt, er ist selbst der Gesuchte/Ersehnte/Geliebte. Er wird auch erreicht, allerdings immer nur als vorübergehendes Etappenziel, das dann wieder zum Anfang weiteren Ziehens wird. Insofern wird er zwar vorläufig immer wieder gefunden, entzieht sich aber letztlich. Das Suchen, Finden und Nicht-Finden aus dem Hohelied wird zum Sinnbild der Tatsache, dass der Bräutigam/Logos die Seele zu sich zieht, sich damit aber zugleich auch immer wieder neu entfernt. Ich finde die Beschreibung dieses Aufstieges als endlose Abfolge von Stufen, wie sie Ekkehard Mühlenberg vorgenommen hat, in dieser Hinsicht sehr zutreffend.⁸⁸

Gods“, in: S. Coakley (ed.), *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Oxford 2003, 15–44, jetzt auch: G. Maspero, *La Trinità e l'uomo. L'Ad Ablabium di Gregorio di Nissa*, Roma 2004, L. Karfiková, „Ad Ablabium, quod non sint tres dei“, in: V.H. Drecoll – M. Berghaus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism. Proceedings of the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Tübingen, 17–20 September 2008)*, Leiden – Boston 2011, 131–168.

- 87 Darüber, ob man bereits in der Beschreibung der Erlösung als Aufstieg und Fortschritt eine „Insuffizienz der Gnadenlehre“ (so A.M. Ritter, „Die Gnadenlehre Gregors von Nyssa nach seiner Schrift *Über das Leben des Mose*“, in: H. Dörrie – M. Altenburger – U. Schramm, *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie. Zweites, internationales Kolloquium über Gregor von Nyssa [Freckenhorst bei Münster, 18.–23. September 1972]*, Leiden 1976, 195–239, 226 ist schon 1972 eine heftige Diskussion entbrannt [vgl. ebd. 230–239]). Eine konsequente Absage an den Fortschrittsgedanken (der ja etwa auch Augustin vertraut ist) ist allerdings tatsächlich erst in Teilen der lutherischen Theologie des 16. Jahrhunderts entwickelt worden.
- 88 Vgl. E. Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa*, 152–157, der sich von J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nyssa*, Paris 1954, 189–199, abgrenzt. A. Louth reduziert – Daniélou folgend – die Bedeutung des Sich-Entziehens des unendlichen Gottes und betont demgegenüber die „soul's experience of God's presence to it“ (*The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 90 f.). Der Verweis auf „the mirror of the soul, the spiritual senses, and the indwelling Word“ ist eine Zusammenfassung von J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, 209–258; zur αἰσθησις τῆς παρουσίας (vgl. *Cant* XI [GNO VI 324,10 f.]) vgl. J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, 195; M. Canévet, „La perception de la présence de Dieu. À propos d'une expression de la XI^e homélie sur le *Cantique des Cantiques*“, in: J. Fontaine – C. Kannengiesser (eds.), *Epektasis. Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou*, Paris 1972, 445–454; F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 301–305, vgl. aber E. Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor*

Der Aufstieg der Seele – und das ist aus den Diskussionen über den mystischen Charakter der Hoheliedauslegung m. E. sehr deutlich als Ergebnis herausgekommen – ist nicht nur, aber durchaus auch ein Weg der Erkenntnis, der das Ziel immer nur in Abschattung, letztlich aber nicht erreicht.⁸⁹ Es ist aber zugleich ein Weg des Sich-Sehnens (incl. Klage) und Liebens (incl. Freude),⁹⁰ d. h. ein Weg des Sich-Ausstreckens bzw. der Epektasis.⁹¹ Und es ist schließlich als drittes ein (unabschließbarer) Weg der Vervollkommnung⁹² und der Umformung zum Schöneren/Höheren/Tugendhafteren.⁹³

Aus dieser kurzen Charakterisierung des Aufstiegs wird deutlich, dass der Charakter des Aufstiegsweg der Seele in ihrem Charakter als unendlich in der Unendlichkeit des göttlichen Ziels begründet ist,⁹⁴ die wiederum ihrer-

von Nyssa, 154. Dadurch wird der Begriff des Unendlichen zu einer beiläufigen oder metaphorischen Redeweise, die lediglich die Intensität des Gottesbegehrens und Gottesbezugs ausdrücken soll (vgl. A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 97). Dem folgt Coakley („Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of *The Song*“, 5), wenn sie ganz die Bedeutung des „desire“ hervorhebt (vgl. auch S. Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self. An Essay On the Trinity*, Cambridge 2013, 285–288).

89 Vgl. T. Böhm, *Theoria – Unendlichkeit – Aufstieg*, 70–78.

90 Vgl. zum Ineinander von Freude und Trauer als Element des Aufstiegs W. Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, 188.

91 Dieser bekanntlich bei Gregor nur einmal auftauchende Begriff (*Cant VI* [GNO VI 174,15]) wurde von J. Daniélou (*Platonisme et théologie mystique*, 291–307) als Inbegriff von Gregors Mystik geprägt, ist jedoch auch dann als Begriff für das unendliche Voranschreiten verwendbar, wenn Daniélous Implikationen nicht geteilt werden.

92 Vgl. R.E. Heine, *Perfection in the Virtuous Life. A Study in the Relationship between Edification and Polemical Theology in Gregory of Nyssa's De Vita Moysis*, Cambridge (Ma) 1975, 63–70; E. Ferguson, „God's Infinity and Man's Mutability: Perpetual Progress according to Gregory of Nyssa“, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 18 (1973) 59–78, 66 f.

93 Vgl. *Cant III* (GNO VI 89 f.).

94 Die grundlegende Bedeutung des Begriffs der Unendlichkeit für Gregors Theologie, sowohl für den Entstehungskontext in der Eunomiuskontroverse als auch für die späten exegetischen Schriften wie die Vita Moysis und den Hoheliedkommentar, hat E. Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa*, besonders 111–133, 152–164, gezeigt. Als einen wichtigen, aber nicht den entscheidenden Angelpunkt sieht den Unendlichkeitsbegriff hingegen F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 323, an. Zur Kritik von W. Ullmann, „Der logische und der theologische Sinn des Unendlichkeitsbegriffs in der Gotteslehre Gregors von Nyssa“, *Bijdragen. Tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie* 48 (1987) 150–171, an Mühlenberg vgl. T. Böhm, *Theoria – Unendlichkeit – Aufstieg*, 131–134. Auch Böhm (*Theoria – Unendlichkeit – Aufstieg*, 124–127), betont, dass die Unendlichkeit nicht das Beweisziel der Argumentationen in *Contra Eunomium* sei. F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 322 f., und T. Böhm, *Theoria – Unendlichkeit – Aufstieg*, 134–136, akzeptieren jedoch die grundlegende Verbindung zwischen der Unendlichkeit Gottes und dem unendlichen Charakter des Aufstiegs. Die Unterscheidung von potentieller und aktueller Unendlichkeit bei T. Böhm, *Theoria – Unendlichkeit – Aufstieg*, 134 f., 142 f. ist besser durch die Differenz zwischen

seits durch die Grenzenlosigkeit, die Unmöglichkeit, begrifflich oder sprachlich erfasst zu werden, und die Unveränderlichkeit bedingt ist.⁹⁵ Die entsprechenden Abschnitte der apophatischen Theologie dienen also genau der positiven Begründung der Unendlichkeit als eines Wesenszuges Gottes (sind also letztlich nicht apophatisch).⁹⁶ Diese Unendlichkeit hat nun soteriologisch (bzw. für die Gnadenlehre der Hoheliedauslegung) eine wichtige Konsequenz: Nicht nur das Ziel muss unendlich sein, sondern der Mittler zu diesem Ziel und der Weg zu diesem Ziel sind es auch. In dem Charakter der Eigenschaft „unendlich“ als einer Eigenschaft, die dem Wesen Gottes als solches zukommt, ist nun aber zugleich seine schlechthinnige Einheit impliziert. Es kann nur einen in dieser Hinsicht Unendlichen geben (da sonst entsprechende gegenseitige Begrenzungen auftauchen würden). Dies führt aber zu der systematisch-theologischen Konsequenz, dass Ziel, Mittler und Weg der Erlösung zusammenfallen. Eine Differenzierung des Handelns ist also im Hinblick auf das unendliche Wesen Gottes nicht möglich. Dementsprechend ist das Schweben zwischen Gott und Logos, das bei der Deutung des Hohelieds immer wieder zu beobachten ist, kein Zufall oder Fehler im System, sondern Ausdruck dieser Grundüberzeugung von der Einheit der unendlichen Natur. Zwar legt es die Bildersprache der Bibel nahe, dass das Handeln des Bräutigams immer wieder explizit auf Christus bezogen wird (und dies ist nicht nur für die Inkarnation so, sondern auch für die Schöpfung und die Gründung der Kirche)⁹⁷. Doch ist dies nicht ein Ergebnis einer Unterscheidung der Hypostasen (und ihrer Funktionen), sondern der Assoziationen aufgrund der biblischen Sprachwelt.

Wenn in dieser Hinsicht nicht nur Ziel und Weg in ihrer Eigenschaft als unendlich übereinstimmen, sondern insbesondere auch der Mittler von sei-

geschaffener und ungeschaffener Natur zu beschreiben, vgl. L. Sweeney, *Divine Infinity in Greek and Medieval Thought*, New York – Frankfurt 1992. 501.

95 Vgl. D. Carabine, „Gregory of Nyssa on the Incomprehensibility of God“, in: T. Finan – V. Twomey (eds.), *The Relationship between Neoplatonism and Christianity*, Dublin 1992, 79–99, 98 f. Als Begründung für die „incomprehensibility“ sieht die Unendlichkeit L. Sweeney, *Divine Infinity in Greek and Medieval Thought*, 492, an; vgl. auch R.S. Brightman, „Apophatic Theology and Divine Infinity in St. Gregory of Nyssa“, in *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 18 (1973) 97–114, 109. Dass die Unerkennbarkeit Gottes aus der Unendlichkeit abgeleitet wird, betont hingegen E. Mühlhberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa*, 199.

96 Die Betonung der ἀπόφασις ohne Bezug zum Unendlichkeitsgedanken bei S. Coakley („Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of *The Song*“, 8) bleibt defizitär. Zu beachten ist auch, dass der apophatische Charakter bei Gregor auf die οὐσία oder φύσις Gottes bezogen bleibt und daher nicht verallgemeinert werden kann (vgl. dazu R.S. Brightman, „Apophatic Theology and Divine Infinity in St. Gregory of Nyssa“, 111).

97 Vgl. *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 255–257); vgl. zur Kirche auch *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 380–383).

nem Wesen her unendlich sein muss, um die Seele bzw. Kirche überhaupt auf diesen unendlichen Weg zu dem unendlichen Ziel bringen zu können, erklärt sich, dass die Benennungen von Ziel und Mittler quasi ineinanderlaufen. Damit ist trinitätstheologisch einerseits relativ wenig gesagt, andererseits relativ viel – wenig deshalb, weil eine ontologische Terminologie hier nicht von Interesse ist, sondern nur sehr selten und am Rande auftaucht, viel aber deshalb, weil eine wichtige systematisch-theologische Konsequenz aus der Eunomiuskontroverse in der Tiefenstruktur der Hoheliedauslegung sehr deutlich wird. Gerade die Tatsache, dass der Logos und Gott in ihrem Wesen übereinstimmen, weil beide zu der einen unendlichen Natur gehören, ist ja der entscheidende Punkt gegen Eunomius gewesen. Dieses Grundergebnis ist in der Hoheliedauslegung aktiv, ohne gezielt angesprochen oder entwickelt werden zu müssen. Auch ohne ontologische Terminologie sind somit wichtige Grundachsen der Trinitätslehre Gregors in den Hoheliedhomilien als zugrundeliegende Struktur präsent.

Eine systematisch-theologische Frage mag sich hieran noch anschließen. Das bisher Ausgeführte verweist auf die Einheit des göttlichen Handelns. Abgesehen davon, dass dieser Gedanke einer einheitlichen Wirksamkeit nicht nur ihr Pendant in der lateinischen Theologie (besonders der *operatio inseparabilis* Augustins) hat, sondern auch in den monotheletischen und monenergistischen Debatten der griechischen Theologie enorme Konsequenzen hat, ist der Punkt systematisch interessant. Die Frage ist, ob Gregor mit der Einführung des Unendlichkeitsprädikats die Einheit nicht nur des Wesens aussagt, sondern zugleich den Unendlichkeitscharakter des göttlichen Handelns einkauft, weil das Ziel des göttlichen Handelns die Einheit mit Gott ist.⁹⁸ Das Handeln ist somit vom Ziel (das zugleich Subjekt ist) abhängig – und dadurch kann man im Falle der unendlichen Natur nicht nur von dem Charakter des Subjekts auf den Charakter des Handelns schließen, sondern auch umgekehrt von dem Charakter des Handelns auf den Charakter des Subjekts. Damit wird durch die Annahme der Unendlichkeit und die Verbindung von Weg, Ziel und Mittler ein ontologischer Sonderfall konstruiert, der nur hier gilt – und aus dem sich systematisch schließen lässt, dass genau in diesem Fall, aber eben nur hier, das Wesen Gottes in dem Handeln, d. h. in dem Heilswerk Christi, sichtbar und als solches auch erkennbar wird. Eine Grenze zwischen der Ontologie und der Heilsgeschichte bzw. Ökonomie wird damit gleichsam unterlaufen. Ob das theologisch kohärent denkbar ist, ist eine eigene Frage, die auch davon abhängig ist, ob man hierin die Gefahr wittert, dass die Unfassbarkeit

98 Vgl. die Erwähnung von 1 Cor 15 in *Cant* XV (GNO VI 469,6).

und Unbeschreibbarkeit des göttlichen Wesens dadurch nicht gerade massiv beeinträchtigt wird. Auch die Frage, welche Bedeutung der Unterschiedenheit der Hypostasen von diesem Ansatz aus zukommt, wäre weiter zu verfolgen. Jedenfalls ist deutlich, dass das merkwürdige Schweben zwischen Gott und Logos bei Gregor von Nyssa weder ein frommes Versehen noch eine in der Gattung des Textes liegende Nachlässigkeit ist, sondern trinitätstheologisch entscheidende Grundfragen aufwirft, in denen Gregor von Nyssa nicht ohne weiteres mit Basilius und Gregor von Nazianz in einen Topf geworfen werden kann.

Bibliographie

- Ayres, L. „On not Three People: The Fundamental Themes of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology as seen in To Ablabius: On not Three Gods“, in: S. Coakley (ed.), *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Oxford 2003, 15–44.
- Balás, D.L. *Μετουσία Θεού. Man's Participation in God's Perfection according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*, Rome 1966.
- Bjerre-Aspegren, K. *Bräutigam, Sonne und Mutter. Studien zu einigen Gottesmetaphern bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Lund 1977.
- Böhm, T. *Theoria – Unendlichkeit – Aufstieg. Philosophische Implikationen zu De vita Moysis von Gregor von Nyssa*, Leiden 1996.
- Brightman, R.S. „Apophatic Theology and Divine Infinity in St. Gregory of Nyssa“, in *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 18 (1973) 97–114.
- Cahill, J.B. „The Date and Setting of Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*“, *JThS* NS 32 (1981) 447–460.
- Canévet, M. „Art. Grégoire de Nysse“, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 6, Paris 1967, coll. 971–1011.
- Canévet, M. „Exégèse et théologie dans les traités spirituels de Grégoire de Nyssa“, in: M. Harl (éd.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du colloque de Chevetogne (22–26 septembre 1969)*, Leiden 1971, 144–168.
- Canévet, M. „La perception de la présence de Dieu. À propos d'une expression de la XI^e homélie sur le *Cantique des Cantiques*“, in: J. Fontaine – C. Kannengiesser (eds.), *Epektasis. Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou*, Paris 1972, 445–454.
- Canévet, M. *Grégoire de Nyssa et l'herméneutique biblique. Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu*, Paris 1983.
- Carabine, D. „Gregory of Nyssa on the Incomprehensibility of God“, in: T. Finan – V. Twomey (eds.), *The Relationship between Neoplatonism and Christianity*, Dublin 1992, 79–99.

- Coakley, S. „Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of *The Song*“, in: Ead., *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa* (ed.), Oxford, 2003, 1–13.
- Coakley, S. *God, Sexuality, and the Self. An Essay On the Trinity*, Cambridge 2013.
- Daniélou, J. *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nyssa*, Paris 1954.
- Daniélou, J. *L'être et le temps chez Grégoire de Nyssa*, Leiden 1970.
- Drecoll, V.H. *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea. Sein Weg vom Homöusianer zum Neonizäner*, Göttingen 1996.
- Dünzl, F. *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993.
- Ferguson, E. „God's Infinity and Man's Mutability: Perpetual Progress according to Gregory of Nyssa“, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 18 (1973) 59–78.
- Heine, R.E. *Perfection in the Virtuous Life. A Study in the Relationship between Edification and Polemical Theology in Gregory of Nyssa's De Vita Moysis*, Cambridge (Ma) 1975.
- Hübner, R. „Gregor von Nyssa und Markell von Ankyra“, in: M. Harl (éd.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du colloque de Chevetogne (22–26 septembre 1969)*, Leiden 1971, 199–229.
- Karfiková, L. „Ad Ablabium, quod non sint tres dei“, in: V.H. Drecoll – M. Berghaus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarianism. Proceedings of the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Tübingen, 17–20 September 2008)*, Leiden – Boston 2011, 131–168.
- Laird, M. „Under Solomon's Tutelage. The Education of Desire in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*“, in: S. Coakley, *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Oxford 2003, 77–95.
- Louth, A. *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition. From Plato to Denys*, Oxford 1981.
- Mann, F. „Art. διδασκαλία“, *Lexicon Gregorianum* 2, Leiden 2000, 393–396.
- Mann, F. „Art. ἔναυσμα“, *Lexicon Gregorianum* 3, Leiden 2001, 226–227.
- Mann, F. „Art. φαντασία“, *Lexicon Gregorianum* 9, Leiden 2013, 407–410.
- Maspero, G. *La Trinità e l'uomo. L'Ad Ablabium di Gregorio di Nissa*, Roma 2004.
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. „La Cristología del *In Canticum Canticorum* de Gregorio de Nisa“, in: H.R. Drobner – C. Klock [hg.], *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der christlichen Spätantike*, 173–190.
- Meredith, A. „The Idea of God in Gregory of Nyssa“, in: H.R. Drobner – C. Klock (eds.), *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der christlichen Spätantike*, Leiden 1990, 127–147.
- Mosshammer, A.A. „The Created and the Uncreated in Gregory of Nyssa *Contra Eunomium* I 270–295 (GNO I, 105–113)“, in: M. Brugarolas (ed.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium I. An English Translation with Supporting Studies*, Leiden 2018, 384–411.
- Mühlenberg, E. *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa. Gregors Kritik am Gottesbegriff der klassischen Metaphysik*, Göttingen 1966.

- Ritter, A.M. „Die Gnadenlehre Gregors von Nyssa nach seiner Schrift *Über das Leben des Mose*“, in: H. Dörrie – M. Altenburger – U. Schramm, *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie. Zweites, internationales Kolloquium über Gregor von Nyssa (Freckenhorst bei Münster, 18.–23. September 1972)*, Leiden 1976, 195–239.
- von Stritzky, M.-B. *Zum Problem der Erkenntnis bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Münster 1973.
- Sweeney, L. *Divine Infinity in Greek and Medieval Thought*, New York – Frankfurt 1992.
- Ullmann, W. „Der logische und der theologische Sinn des Unendlichkeitsbegriffs in der Gotteslehre Gregors von Nyssa“, *Bijdragen. Tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie* 48 (1987) 150–171.
- Völker, W. *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, Wiesbaden 1955.

The Incarnate Logos: Gregory of Nyssa's *In Canticum Canticorum* Christological Core

Miguel Brugarolas

1 Introduction

The reception of the Christology of Gregory of Nyssa in recent decades has not been a simple matter. In fact, his Christology may be one of the areas of his thought that has received the most diverse evaluations among scholars.¹ Perhaps for this reason, it is also an area in which the path opened for *rethinking* Gregory's contributions is particularly appealing.²

This new reading of Gregory's Christology calls for, among other things, the sometimes forgotten need to study Gregory from the perspective of the great unity of his thought and writings. If this is important for any aspect of Gregory's thought, it is even more so for his Christology, which is scattered throughout his writings, both theological and spiritual.

In fact, Gregory's Christology is not restricted to the dogmatic or polemical works against Apollinaris and Eunomius, but runs throughout his spiritual, exegetical and liturgical writings. Among Gregory's most Christologically rel-

1 A common point of departure in the debate on Gregory's Christology are J. Tixeront's criticisms of Gregory's Christological language (cf. J. Tixeront, *Histoire des dogmes dans l'antiquité chrétienne. 11: De Saint Athanase a Saint Augustin* [318–430], Paris 1931, 128–129); whereas the study that has probably been the most fruitful was that of J.-R. Bouchet, which continues to be a point of reference: J.-R. Bouchet, "Le vocabulaire de l'union et du rapport des natures chez Grégoire de Nysse", *RThom* 68 (1968) 533–582. Other major studies are those published by L.F. Mateo-Seco, among which are notable: L.F. Mateo-Seco, *Estudios sobre la Cristología de Gregorio de Nisa*, Pamplona 1978; and Id., "Notas sobre el lenguaje cristológico de Gregorio de Nisa", *Scripta Theologica* 35 (2003) 89–112. Finally, a significant advance in the studies of Gregory's Christology was the International Colloquium of Athens: E.D. Moutsoulas (ed.), *Jesus Christ in St. Gregory of Nyssa's Theology: minutes of the Ninth International Conference on St. Gregory of Nyssa (Athens, 7–12 September 2000)*, Athens 2005.

2 This ongoing movement of rethinking Gregory's Christology includes, among others: B.E. Daley, "Divine Transcendence and Human Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa's Anti-Apollinarian Christology", *StPatr* 32 (1997) 87–95; S. Coakley, "'Mingling' in Gregory of Nyssa's Christology: A Reconsideration", in: A. Schuele—G. Thomas, *Who is Jesus Christ for us today? Pathways to contemporary christology*, Louisville 2009, 72–84; J. Zachhuber, "Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium III 4", in: J. Leemans—M. Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa Contra Eunomium III. An English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Leuven, 14–17 September 2010)*, Leiden 2014, 313–334.

evant works, three large blocks can be distinguished according to their genre and style. On the one hand, there are the dogmatic works, especially the books *Contra Eunomium* and the two writings against Apollinaris—*Ad Theophilum* and *Antihreticus adversus Apolinarem*—, to which one should add the *Oratio catequetica magna* and also the *Epistula* 3.³ In these works of dogmatic character, Gregory defends the divinity of the Word against the doctrines of Arius and Eunomius, and defends the complete humanity of Christ against Apollinaris.⁴ In all of them, Gregory goes into the essentially soteriological and *philanthropic* character of the Incarnation.⁵ On the other hand, Christology is also essential in the spiritual writings of Gregory, whether in the small treatises or in the Biblical commentaries. It is important to note that Gregory's thinking about Christ, already present in his first work, *De Virginitate*,⁶ reaches a new height in his later years, during which he most likely wrote both *De Vita Moysis* and *In Canticum*, along with the small treatises *De perfectione*, *De instituto Christiano* and *De professione Christiana*. For Gregory, the Christian life has a clearly Christocentric character,⁷ which means that these works should not be considered "minor" from a Christological point of view. Finally, the liturgical homilies of Gregory—especially those dedicated to the feasts of the Lord—also stand out due to their lofty Christology.

An overview of these works allows one to perceive the continuity found in Gregory's thought between Bible and liturgy, and between Christology, sacraments and spiritual life.⁸ As various authors have noted, Gregory's thought is profoundly Christological.⁹ In reading Gregory's texts, one has the impression

3 According to P. Maraval, *Epist* 3 (GNO VIII/2 19–27), which was written in the context of the Trinitarian controversy surrounding the Council of Constantinople (381), would be Gregory's first strictly Christological writing. Cf. P. Maraval, "La lettre 3 de Grégoire de Nysse dans le débat christologique", *RSR* 61 (1987) 74–89; A. Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters. Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, Leiden 2007, 123–132.

4 Cf. A. Meredith, *Gregory of Nyssa*, London 2003, 46–48.

5 Cf. E.D. Moutsoulas, *Γρηγόριος Νύσσης. Βίος, Συγγράμματα, Διδασκαλία*, Athens 1997, 408–431.

6 It is sufficient to recall the statements from chapter 11 of *Virg* (GNO VIII/1 253,6–255,28), where Gregory manifests the Christological foundation of his understanding of virginity: embracing virginity means associating oneself with the mystery of the Incarnation. Cf. M. Aubineau, *Grégoire de Nysse. Traité de la Virginité*, SC 119, Paris 1966, 163–165.

7 This has been highlighted by L.F. Mateo-Seco, "Imitación y seguimiento de Cristo en Gregorio de Nisa", *Scripta Theologica* 33 (2001) 601–622.

8 Cf. J. Daniélou, *Bible et liturgie. La théologie biblique des Sacrements et des fêtes d'après les Pères de l'Église*, Paris 1962. On the continuity between Christology and sacraments, and sacraments and spiritual life see also: J. Daniélou—H. Musurillo, *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, Crestwood (NY) 1979, 18–22.

9 Cf. J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, Paris 1944, 252–258, 309; W. Völker, *Gregor von*

that many aspects of his theological and spiritual thought are united and articulated around the mystery of Christ. One might say that Gregory's thought, seen from the perspective of its great unity, entails a profoundly Christological *akolouthia*.

This last is certainly reflected in studying the Christology underlying Gregory's *In Canticum*. In this work, which fundamentally concerns the mystical union of the soul with God, the Christology appears as a thought in the background that naturally emerges when Gregory interprets Biblical texts and expounds his spiritual doctrine in the context of his preaching.



The *In Canticum Cantorum*—Gregory of Nyssa's longest and most complex Biblical commentary and spiritual treatise¹⁰—is a work in which Gregory proves himself especially capable, both in making use of earlier sources, especially Origen, and in innovating and introducing his own interpretations with great liberty.¹¹ Here Gregory is not motivated by a polemic to which he must respond, nor do circumstances seem to impose upon him or constrain him either to address certain issues or to maintain some concrete perspective in his exegesis. For this reason the question of the Christological doctrine in the *In Canticum* is especially intriguing.

It is logical, as F. Dünzl notes, that the spiritual doctrine of *In Canticum* preserves noticeable traces of Gregory's polemics with Eunomius and Apollinaris that occurred years earlier.¹² In fact, the theories of Eunomius and Apollinaris probably led Gregory to deepen his Christological thought and to better outline his doctrine.¹³ Nevertheless, the Christology that we find in *In Canticum* is so

Nyssa als mystiker, Wiesbaden 1955, 269–274; Cf. E. Moutsoulas, “The person of Jesus Christ in St. Gregory of Nyssa”, in Id., *Jesus Christ in St. Gregory on Nyssa's theology*, 107; or the strong statement in this regard by L.F. Mateo-Seco: “Christ occupies the central position in Gregory's theology and spirituality: Both are radically and completely Christocentric”, L.F. Mateo-Seco, “Christology”, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 139.

10 Cf. M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nysse et l'herméneutique biblique. Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu*, Paris 1983, 275–276.

11 Cf. M. Canévet, “Exégèse et théologie dans les traités spirituels de Grégoire de Nysse”, in: M. Harl, *Écriture et culture phisosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du Colloque de Chevetogne (22–26 Septembre 1969)*, Leiden 1971, 144–168; M. Simonetti, *Lettera e/o Allegoria. Un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica*, Roma 1985, 148–149, 152–154; C. Moreschini, *Gregorio di Nissa. Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici*, Roma 1996, 7.

12 F. Dünzl, *Gregor von Nyssa. Homelien zum Hohenlied*, I, Freiburg 1994, 20–22.

13 For example, the polemic with Eunomius probably contributed to the development of

congruent with Gregory's spiritual doctrine that it seems to go beyond simple reminiscences of past discussions. The *In Canticum* is an impressive example of the interconnection of exegesis, spiritual doctrine and theology in Gregory's thought.¹⁴ Thus, these *Homilies* offer a particular and valuable opportunity to approach to Gregory's Christological doctrine from a perspective in which the major points of his thought are intertwined.¹⁵

Furthermore, in a time when the still technically imprecise Christological language is a great limitation in the field of Christology, the poetic and spiritual style of Gregory's *Homilies* bear a theological fruit of great clarity and profundity.¹⁶ In a way, in the realm of this beautiful and poetic language, Gregory manages to "overcome" the limits of his vocabulary (that is technically deficient in many of his other writings) and reveals the depth of his Christology.¹⁷ Thus it may be very useful to read the dogmatic Christology of Gregory from the perspective of his spiritual Christology.

This study is divided into four parts and a final conclusion. It begins with a general approach to *In Canticum* from the point of view of the Christology as a framework for a subsequent analysis of the texts (I). In the sections that follow, Gregory's Christology is studied based on selected texts. We will address the Incarnation as the "descent" of the Word, and its kenotic, theophanic and philanthropic character (II). We will highlight the way in which Gregory speaks about the union of natures in Christ in the *In Canticum*, and we will pay particular attention to his use of the *communicatio idiomatum* (III). Finally, we will

Gregory's understanding of divine perfection, transcendence, and infinity, which are key topics in Christology. Cf. E. Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa. Gregors Kritik am Gottesbegriff der klassischen Metaphysik*, Göttingen 1966, 133–147. Nevertheless, beyond the fact of eunomian polemic the continuity of Gregory's thought is noticeable, O. Sferlea, "L'infinité divine chez Grégoire de Nysse: de l'anthropologie à la polémique trinitaire", *VigChr* 67 (2013) 137–168.

14 Cf. S. Coakley, "Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa: Introduction—Gender, Trinitarian analogies, and the pedagogy of *The Song*", *MoTh* 18 (2002) 432.

15 John Behr has expounded the continuity between the Christology and spiritual doctrine in Gregory's work. Cf. J. Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology. Volume 2: The Nicene Faith. Part Two: One of the Holy Trinity*, Crestwood 2004, 435–473.

16 Regarding the Christological terminology utilised by Gregory of Nyssa, the extensive study by J.-R. Bouchet continues to be a reference: J.-R. Bouchet, "Le vocabulaire de l'union", 533–582. See also: J. Daniélou, *L'être et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Leiden 1970, 116–132; G.Ch. Stead, "Ontology and Terminology in Gregory of Nyssa", in: H. Dörrie (ed.), *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie*, Leiden 1976, 107–127; L.F. Mateo-Seco, "Notas sobre el lenguaje cristológico de Gregorio de Nisa", 89–112; M. Brugarolas, "Theological Remarks on Gregory of Nyssa's Christological Language of 'Mixture'", *Studia Patristica* 84 (2017), 39–58.

17 Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, "Notas sobre el lenguaje cristológico de Gregorio de Nisa", 102.

examine the subject of the Name of Christ and the Christological language of the contraries (IV).

2 The Homilies in *Canticum Canticorum* from a Christological Perspective

From beginning to end, throughout the xv *Homilies*, Gregory makes many allusions to the Incarnation or to various issues related to Christology and soteriology.¹⁸ In the *Prologue*, Gregory proposes the “exegesis of the Logos” as the model for understanding Sacred Scripture.¹⁹ Later, in the final paragraphs of *Homily* xv, following Jn 17.21–23, Gregory addresses the unity of the Trinity in Glory and the communication of this glory to men through the Word clothed in human nature.²⁰ One might say that the Christology in the *In Canticum* is scattered and unsystematic, but with a great wealth of content and nuances.

Perhaps a good way of demonstrating the degree to which these homilies are filled with a deep Christological meaning would be to focus in the multitude and variety of appellations that Gregory uses for Christ. The references to Christ—who is called Logos, Kyrios or Christ—are constant throughout the entire work: He is the Bridegroom, protagonist of this nuptial poem and of Gregory’s commentary, but He is also—among other appellations—the new Solomon,²¹ the Fount,²² the gazelle and the deer,²³ the Hand that knocks at the door,²⁴ the new Garment,²⁵ the “brother” of the Bride,²⁶ the first fruits,²⁷

18 A large number of the Christological texts have been collected and studied by L.F. Mateo-Seco, “La cristología del *In Canticum Canticorum*”, in: H.R. Drobner—Ch. Klock (eds.), *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der Christlichen Spätantike*, Leiden 1990, 173–190.

19 In the Gospel, the Logos teaches us—“in parables, in similitudes, in dark sayings, in aphorisms, things set forth in the form of enigmatic statements”—a more elevated interpretation that goes beyond the immediate meaning of the words, and lead us towards a more divine and incorporeal reality. Cf. *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 7,16–10,4).

20 Cf. *Cant* xv (GNO VI 467,2–17). This is a text of great theological value, especially in regards to what it says about the Holy Spirit. Cf. M. Brugarolas, “The Holy Spirit as the ‘glory’ of Christ. Gregory of Nyssa on John 17.22”, in: N. Dumitrescu (ed.), *The Ecumenical Legacy of the Cappadocians*, London 2015, 252–256; Id., *El Espíritu Santo: de la divinidad a la procesión*, Pamplona 2012, 227–232.

21 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 17,2–7).

22 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 32,17); *Cant* II (GNO 62,4); *Cant* IX (GNO VI 293,10–14).

23 Cf. *Cant* V (GNO VI 141,5–15).

24 Cf. *Cant* XI (GNO VI 338,15–339,4).

25 Cf. *Cant* XI (GNO VI 328,2–10).

26 Cf. *Cant* XV (GNO VI 436,6 ff.).

27 Cf. *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 381,20–22 and 391,5–12); *Cant* XIV (GNO VI 427,22).

the shaded bed,²⁸ the Good Shepherd,²⁹ the Good Samaritan,³⁰ etc. In addition to these appellations, there are others that, being also strongly rooted in Gregory's exegesis of the *Song of Songs*, could be considered "more theological".³¹ For example, Gregory states that *philanthropy* is the name of Christ;³² that the Lord is *sanctification*;³³ purity, incorruptibility, light and truth;³⁴ He is, in his being, Wisdom and Truth;³⁵ He is the Beauty, image of the first, unique and true Beauty and archetype of beauty;³⁶ definitively, his name—following Phil 2.9—is that which is above every name.³⁷ These appellations, considered together, reflect the centrality of the mystery of Christ in Gregory's exegesis and theology of the *Song of Songs*; and, equally important, they reflect Gregory's effort to illuminate through Scripture the inexhaustible richness of the mystery of Christ, which transcends all human words.³⁸

In particular, from a strictly Christological point of view, some *Homilies* stand out from the rest,³⁹ especially *Homilies* II–V and *Homilies* XI and XIII. In

28 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 108,10 ff.).

29 Cf. *Cant* II (GNO VI 61,4–13); *Cant* V (GNO VI 168,15–169,2); *Cant* XV (GNO VI 438,5–6).

30 Cf. *Cant* XIV (GNO VI 427,1–428,8); *Cant* XV (GNO VI 436,11–16).

31 M. Harl has emphasised the importance of the Scriptural terms in *In Canticum*. These, which are more than an attempt by Gregory to "Christianise" a mystical inspiration of solely Platonic origin analogous to that of Plotinus, manifests the Christian culture that is common to both Gregory and his recipients. Cf. M. Harl, "Références philosophiques et références bibliques du langage de Grégoire de Nyssse dans ses *Orationes in Canticum Canticatorum*", in: H. Eisenberger (Hrsg.), *ΕΡΜΗΝΕΥΜΑΤΑ. Festschrift für Hadwig Hörner zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, Heidelberg 1990, 131.

32 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 107,4–5): ὃ ὄνομα ἡ φιλανθρωπία ἐγένετο.

33 Cf. *Cant* XI (GNO VI 332,8): ἁγιασμός δὲ ὁ κύριος.

34 Cf. *Cant* XV (GNO VI 441,3–4): ὅς ἐστιν ἁγιασμός καὶ καθαρότης καὶ ἀφθαρσία καὶ φῶς καὶ ἀλήθεια καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ὅσα.

35 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 17,2–7).

36 Cf. *Cant* II (GNO VI 51,10–13); *Cant* IV (GNO VI 101,20–102,3 and 106,20–107,1); *Cant* XV (GNO VI 439,3–20). About this issue cf. M. Brugarolas, "Beauty and the presence of God in the soul: Gregory of Nyssa's commentary on Ct 5,2", in: J.E. Rutherford (ed.), *The Beauty of God's Presence in the Fathers of the Church. The Proceedings of the Eighth International Patristic Conference, Maynooth, 2012*, Dublin 2014, 143–147.

37 Cf. *Cant* II (GNO VI 61,14–15); *Cant* VI (GNO 182,1).

38 The names of Christ are an example of how, throughout *In Canticum*, the point of departure of Gregory's Christology is—to use the expression of J. Behr—the understanding of Christ "according to the Scriptures", cf. J. Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology. Volume 2: The Nicene Faith. Part Two: One of the Holy Trinity*, 475.

39 M. Canévet wrote a brief and thoughtful description of *In Canticum* that reflects well its Christological framework. Cf. M. Canévet, "Exégèse et théologie", 146–155; cf. Id., *Grégoire de Nyssse et l'herméneutique biblique*, 276–282. A much more detailed analysis is at F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993, 56–222.

Homilies II–V, the predominant reflection is that of the role of the Incarnation as the foundation of a manner of existence for man.⁴⁰ *Homily* II begins with the explanation of Ct 1.5: the Bride, who through sin became black,⁴¹ is, through the *philanthropy* of the Bridegroom, clothed in his beauty. Gregory addresses here the original beauty of man, the evil that “came from outside” through temptation and sin,⁴² and the restorative consequences of the Incarnation.⁴³ *Homily* III, which has a more moral character than the first, addresses the progression of the soul that, saved by Baptism⁴⁴ and by means of virtue,⁴⁵ begins to have an initial sensation of the Bridegroom: the perfume of Christ, a faint sensation of the transcendent and invisible divine nature.⁴⁶ In *Homily* IV, Gregory states that through the Incarnation, Christ is the mediator between man and the inaccessible nature of God;⁴⁷ he directs the Bride toward the good and receives her in the participation of his incorruptible eternity.⁴⁸ The Christological *akolouthia* continues in *Homily* V, in which Gregory—distancing himself

40 Cf. M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nysse et l'herméneutique biblique*, 277.

41 The Bride uses the term “αἴσχος” (shame, ugliness), thus evoking the disgrace of the first sin, cf. *Cant* II (GNO VI 46,13).

42 Cf. *Cant* II (GNO VI 50,14–16). Gregory, in contrast to Origen, identifies the sun (cf. Ct 1.6) with temptation, cf. *Cant* II (GNO VI 51,19 f.).

43 Cf. *Cant* II (GNO VI 46,8–13). The Bridegroom makes the Bride participate (κοινωνόν) in his own beauty (cf. *Cant* II [GNO VI 46,15]). To illustrate this, the Nyssen uses the example of the conversion of Paul (cf. 1 Tim 13,15) and states that “Christ came into the world to make dark ones bright” (cf. *Cant* II [GNO VI 48,18–49,1]).

44 Gregory speaks of baptism—“mystical water”—taking as *type* the passage through the Red Sea, cf. *Cant* III (GNO 73,2–78,4).

45 For Gregory, the necklaces of the Bride are the adornments of virtue, cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 78,5–82,16).

46 Cf. C. Moreschini, *Gregorio di Nissa. Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici*, 18; cf. M. Canévet, “Exégèse et théologie”, 148. The transcendence of the Uncreated is seen especially in this Homily when he speaks about the “perfume of nard”, which Gregory explains from his theology of the image: “knowledge of the Good that transcends every intellect comes to us through the virtues, even as it is possible to get through analogy an image of the archetypal Beauty” (cf. *Cant* III [GNO VI 90,19–91,4]). In the same vein of this emphasis of the divine transcendence, is the exegesis that Gregory develops, following Origen, regarding gold and silver (cf. Ct 1.11; *Cant* III [GNO VI 85,15–86,12]). Gold represents the incomprehensible divine nature, and silver the power of reason and the word. W.A. Baehrens, *Origen. Homilien zu Samuel I, zum Hohelied und zu den Propheten*, Leipzig 1925, GCS 33, 159–160 (II 8,11–20); R.A. Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012, 95, nt. 19.

47 M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nysse et l'herméneutique biblique*, 278. As we will see below, Gregory interprets the shaded bed of Ct 1.6 as a reference to the economy of the Incarnation through which Christ, with his body, overshadowed the brilliance of the divinity so that humans might receive him (cf. *Cant* IV [GNO 107,9 ff.]).

48 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 129,5–7).

from Origen—⁴⁹ understands the voice of the Bridegroom, which approaches like a gazelle or a fawn, as a reference to the Incarnation.⁵⁰ An overview of these *Homilies*—M. Canévet observes—uncovers a progressive theological exposition of the Incarnation: its relation to liberation from sin, its function in the knowledge of God and the mediating character of Christ, which is founded on the unity of his two natures.⁵¹

Homily XI, as is well known, addresses the relation of the Bride and the Logos and does so in terms that suggest mystical union as the highest possible knowledge of God. Many have studied the homily in regards to the knowledge of God and the mystical theology that it contains, but perhaps its grand Christological character has gone rather unnoticed. This Christological character is reflected, for example, when it states that the Lord is the sanctification and the tunic of the soul,⁵² or when it speaks of the descent of the Word to the smallness of human knowledge, or the wonder of the Bride before the miracles of Christ, particularly before the Incarnation.⁵³

In *Homily XIII*, the question of Ct 5.9—“What is your bridegroom more than others?”—is used by Gregory to introduce a long Christological *excursus*, which has been considered a brief Christological treatise.⁵⁴ These are paragraphs that present the fundamental traits of Gregory’s Christology, and where one may detect what J.-R. Bouchet calls Gregory’s “fascination” for the consequences of the Incarnation and the strong soteriological character of his Christology.⁵⁵

Studying the Christology of these Homilies provides an extensive range of issues and a variety of nuances, which are very difficult to synthesize without falling into reductionism. If one had to highlight some of the most important points, from my point of view, the following must be included:

1. The manner in which Gregory speaks of the Incarnation demonstrates the depth with which he understands the unity of Christ. The truth of the divinity of the Word and the “radical nature” of the scope of Incarnation are boldly articulated in Gregory’s use of the *communicatio idiomatum*.

49 As noted by M. Canévet, Origen understands the voice of the Bridegroom as an image of the mystic tribulations, during which the Bridegroom seems at some times present and at others absent, cf. M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nysse et l’herméneutique biblique*, 279.

50 Cf. *Cant V* (GNO VI 141,5–15).

51 Cf. M. Canévet, “Exégèse et théologie”, 150.

52 Cf. *Cant XI* (GNO VI 332,8).

53 Cf. *Cant XI* (GNO VI 337,3–4).

54 Cf. *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 380,15–390,8); cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, “La cristología del *In Canticum Cantorum*”, 185.

55 Cf. J.-R. Bouchet, “Le vocabulaire de l’union”, 539, 549.

2. The understanding of Christ as Mediator is the axis on which two of Gregory's essential affirmations turn: the transcendence of God and his absolute distance with respect to creatures; and the possibility of a true knowledge of God and an authentic contact, or "union", of man with God.
3. Gregory's consideration of divine *philanthropy* as the principle that informs Christology, making Christology and soteriology essentially inseparable. One could say that for Gregory, soteriology is the meaning of Christology and Christology is the realisation of soteriology.

These three issues, which are closely related to one another, belong to the core of Gregory's Christology, and are essential for understanding the unavoidable Christological character of his spiritual doctrine. This is what we will attempt to demonstrate below with some selected texts from the *In Canticum*.

3 The True Incarnation: Fleshly Theophany and Divine Philanthropy

On more than one occasion, the lack of precision in Gregory's technical Christological vocabulary has been a source of criticism of his Christology, which has been described both as monophysite and diphysite.⁵⁶ However, as J.R. Bouchet⁵⁷ and L.F. Mateo-Seco⁵⁸ have shown, a complete study of Gregory's Christological language in its context leads to a more thoughtful judgment. Behind a technically deficient language, a deep and rather balanced Christology can be found. This is further evidenced by those *Homilies* in which—as S. Coakley observes—"Gregory has deployed a particular, and very subtle, form of apophatic speech in expressing his Christology".⁵⁹ With poetic and metaphoric expressions, and always following the Biblical texts, Gregory illuminates *together* the truth of the absolute divinity of the Word and the truth of human nature taken on by the Incarnation.

56 Cf. J. Tixeront, *Histoire des dogmes dans l'antiquité chrétienne. 11: De Saint Athanase a Saint Augustin (318–430)*, 128–129; J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, New York 1978, 299–230; A. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche. Band 1: Von der Apostolischen Zeit bis zum Konzil von Chalcedon (451)*, Freiburg 1979, 539–547. Regarding recent interpretations—frequently critical—of Gregory's Christology in the Anglo-Saxon sphere, cf. M. Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa, Ancient and (Post)modern*, Oxford 2007, 97 ff.

57 Cf. J.-R. Bouchet, "Le vocabulaire de l'union", 533–582; Id., "A propos d'une image christologique de Grégoire de Nysse", *RThom* 67 (1967) 584–588.

58 Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, "Notas sobre el lenguaje cristológico de Gregorio de Nisa", 89–112.

59 S. Coakley, "'Mingling' in Gregory of Nyssa's Christology", 179.

In the *In Canticum*, the Incarnation is described as an authentic *theophany* of God in the flesh—*διὰ σαρκὸς θεοφανεΐας*⁶⁰—He that is Invisible is manifested in the flesh.⁶¹ The movement is fundamentally downward, kenotic; it is the Word that descends and lowers himself toward man. This is expressed in various ways in several verses of the *Song of Songs*, and by referencing, directly and indirectly, important texts from the NT. The texts Jn 1.14, Phil 2.6–9 and 1 Tim 3.16 are preferred by Gregory because they contain two essential Christological affirmations: the divinity of Christ and the truth of the assumption of a human nature.⁶² Three texts from *Homilies* IV, XI and XV serve here to illustrate this “descent” of the Word, making himself accessible to man.

The first of these is the commentary to Ct 1.16–17, in which Gregory connects and explains the words *ecce pulcher es, cognatus meus et formosus* and the description of the nuptial bed, *lectus noster umbrosus*. He understands the words of the Bride as an affirmation of the divinity of the Word and a description of his incarnation.

The beauty of the Bridegroom is associated with the divinity of the Word, He is “the very substance of Beauty” and his beauty lasts as long as the eternity of his life.⁶³ Gregory, alluding to this beauty of the Word, describes the perfection of the divine saying: “you are always what you are”.⁶⁴ This way of speaking—that calls to mind the description of the self-possession of the Good in Plotinus (“as he willed, so also he is [...] and his substance is as he wills”)⁶⁵—emphasizes the perfection of the divine and the union in God between being and eternity.⁶⁶ Thus, in the Incarnation—which is the descent of divine beauty to the shadow of the body—the *katabasis* of the Word is, in a certain sense, infinite, as it is in a certain way the abyss between God and the creature.⁶⁷ These are Gregory’s words:

60 *Cant* V (GNO VI 164,6); cf. *Cant* VIII (GNO VI 254,15); *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 383,18–19); *Cant* XV (GNO VI 433,4).

61 *Cant* V (GNO VI 141,10): θεὸς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί.

62 Cf. M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nysse et l’herméneutique biblique*, 240.

63 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 106,20–107,4): σὺ δὲ ἀληθῶς εἰ καλός, οὐ καλὸς μόνον ἀλλ’ αὐτὴ τοῦ καλοῦ ἡ οὐσία, αἰ τοιοῦτος ὑπάρχων, πάντοτε ὦν ὅπερ εἶ, οὔτε κατὰ καιρὸν ἀνθρώπων οὔτε ἐπὶ καιροῦ πάλιν ἀποβάλλων τὸ ἄνθος, ἀλλὰ τῇ αἰδιότητι τῆς ζωῆς συμπαρατείνων τὴν ὥραν.

64 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 107,2): πάντοτε ὦν ὅπερ εἶ.

65 Plotinus, *Enneades* VI 8,13 (*Plotini Opera* III [eds. P. Henri, H.-R. Schwyzler], 256–257; Plotinus, *VII: Enneads* VI.6–9, Cambridge 1988, 269 [tr. Armstrong]): εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, ὡς ἄρα ἐβούλετο, οὕτω καὶ ἔστιν. Οὐ μᾶλλον ἄρα ὡς πέφυκε βούλεται τε καὶ ἐνεργεῖ, ἢ ὡς βούλεται τε καὶ ἐνεργεῖ ἡ οὐσία ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ.

66 Cf. D.L. Balás, “Eternity and Time”, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 289–292.

67 Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, “Notas sobre el lenguaje cristológico de Gregorio de Nisa”, 99.

Lectus noster umbrosus. That is, human nature knows you, and will know you, shadowed by the economy. For—she says—You have come, the beautiful, the beloved (ἀδελφιδός), the graceful one, to our bed thickly shaded. For unless you shaded yourself over with *the form of a servant* (Phil 2.7) while unveiling the pure rays of your divinity, who could resist your appearance? *For no one can see Lord's face and live* (Ex 33.20). Therefore, You have come as the one who is beautiful, but in such wise as we are able to receive you. You came, having shadowed over the rays of your divinity by the garment of a body.⁶⁸

As a result of the economy, the Word has descended to the point of making himself accessible to men, veiling himself with the “form of a servant”, through the “shadow of the body”. The incarnation, then, is an authentic, splendid and radiant outpouring of the divine nature, realized in such a way that man can receive it, that is, veiled beneath the shadow of the body.⁶⁹ Thus, and this is truly important, the body of Christ—his human nature—is at the same time a “shadow” that conceals and a “garment” that manifests.⁷⁰ In another place Gregory says of the bride: “becoming more clear-sighted, she begins to comprehend the beauty

68 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 107,9–108,7): Εἴτα ἐπήγαγε πρὸς κλίνην ἡμῶν σύσκιος. τουτέστιν ἔγνω σε ἥτοι γνώσεται ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις σύσκιον τῇ οἰκονομίᾳ γενόμενον· ἥλθες γάρ φησι σὺ ὁ καλὸς ἀδελφιδός, ὁ ὡραῖος, πρὸς τῇ κλίνῃ ἡμῶν σύσκιος γενόμενος. εἰ γὰρ μὴ συνεσκιάσας αὐτὸς σεαυτὸν τὴν ἄκρατον τῆς θεότητος ἀκτίνα συγκαλύψας τῇ τοῦ δούλου μορφῇ, τίς ἂν ὑπέστη σου τὴν ἐμφάνειαν; οὐδεὶς γὰρ ὅψεται πρόσωπον κυρίου καὶ ζήσεται. ἥλθες τοίνυν ὁ ὡραῖος, ἀλλ' ὡς χωροῦμεν δεῖξασθαι τοιοῦτος γενόμενος· ἥλθες τὰς τῆς θεότητος ἀκτίνας τῇ περιβολῇ συσκιάσας τοῦ σώματος. For the English translation of Gregory's texts we rely on the available translations: J. Daniélou—H. Musurillo, *From Glory to Glory. Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, Crestwood 1979; C. McCambley, *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Brookline 1987; and R.A. Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012.

69 A.A. Mosshammer, commenting on this text, emphasises in a compelling way the parallel between the body of Christ that “veils” the glory of God, and Sacred Scripture “as a ‘veil’ for hidden meanings”. In this way, in Scripture one also discovers the “condescension” of God (cf. A.A. Mosshammer, “Disclosing but not Disclosed. Gregory of Nyssa as Deconstructionist”, in: H.R. Drobner—Ch. Klock (eds.), *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der Christlichen Spätantike*, 110–111).

70 Cf. A. Cortesi, *Le omelie sul cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nissa. Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale*, Roma 2000, 93–95. Thus, the “shadow” of the body, in this text of Gregory, does not have any negative connotation in reference to sin, as it does have in Origen's commentary on this passage (cf. *ibidem*, 95). In the words of S. Coakley, in this text, “shadow” indicates the “apophatic mysteriousness” of the divine revelation through incarnation (cf. S. Coakley, “‘Mingling’ in Gregory of Nyssa's Christology”, 78).

of the Word, and she marvels at how He descends in shadow to the bed of the lower life, shadowed by the material nature of the human body”.⁷¹

The Word manifested his divinity in the flesh and for this reason is rightly called by the spouse ἀδελφιδός,⁷² which literally means “little brother” or “nephew”.⁷³ According to Origen, the Bridegroom is called “nephew” of the Bride because she is the image of the church that comes from the nations, sister of the first people—the people of Judah—from which Christ was born.⁷⁴ Gregory, here and elsewhere,⁷⁵ follows this interpretation; although in this case the emphasis on “consanguinity” with the Word could be even more meaningful because here the Bride is primarily the image of the soul and human nature. The soul rightly calls the Word *brother*, alluding to the link of “consanguinity” that unites the soul with Him in virtue of the Incarnation. Certainly, this manner of speaking highlights the veracity of the human nature assumed by the Word.

Gregory continues his commentary with a few words that describe in a striking and beautiful way the union of the soul with God, at the same time that they reveal the “mediation” exercised by the body of Christ—the Incarnation—in this union:

For how could a mortal and perishable nature be capable of spousal union (συζυγία συναρμοσθῆναι) with the imperishable and inaccessible nature unless the shadow of the body acted as a mediator of the light for us who live in the darkness?⁷⁶

Gregory uses a very strong expression—spousal union—to refer to the union of the soul with God.⁷⁷ S. Coakley, commenting on this passage, recommends understanding this expression as a reference to the union of the divine and

71 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 176,11–14): διορατικωτέρα γὰρ γινομένη κάκεινη τοῦ λόγου καταμανθάνει τὴν ὥραν καὶ θαυμάζει, πῶς σύσκιος ἐπὶ τὴν κλίνην τῆς κάτω ζωῆς καταβαίνει τῇ ὕλικῇ τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου σώματος φύσει συσκιαζόμενος.

72 Cf. *Cant IV* (GNO VI 107,5–8): ὅτι ἄρα ἐξ Ἰούδα ἀνέτειλας ἡμῖν, ἀδελφός δὲ ὁ Ἰουδαίων λαὸς τοῦ ἐξ ἔθνων σοι προσιόντος, καλῶς διὰ τὴν ἐν σαρκὶ γεγεννημένην τῆς θεότητός σου φανέρωσιν ἀδελφιδός τῆς ποθοῦσης κατωνομάσθης.

73 Cf. R.A. Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, 119, nt. 11.

74 Cf. Origen, *Commentarium In Canticum* II 10,3 (GCS 33 168,19–169,1).

75 Cf. *Cant III* (GNO VI 93,15); *Cant XV* (GNO VI 436,9).

76 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 108,7–10): πῶς γὰρ ἂν ἐχώρησε θνητὴ καὶ ἐπικηρος φύσις τῇ ἀκηράτῳ καὶ ἀπροσίτῳ συζυγία συναρμοσθῆναι, εἰ μὴ τοῖς ἐν σκότῳ ζώσιν ἡμῖν ἡ σκιά τοῦ σώματος πρὸς τὸ φῶς ἐμεσίτευσεν.

77 Cf. G. Maspero, *Trinity and Man. Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabium*, Leiden 2007, 128, nt. 107.

human natures in Christ; that is, Gregory is describing—with a language more apophatic than technical—the mystery of the Incarnation in terms of spousal union between the two natures.⁷⁸ Although this could perhaps seem too bold, what is clear is that if such a union is possible between the soul and the Word, between human nature and divine infinity, it is because this union first took place in the person of Christ.⁷⁹

In fact, it is the “shadow of the body”, i.e., the human nature assumed by Christ, that, acting as mediator, as intermediary, makes possible the union with God, who is in himself inaccessible. Or, to put it another way, it is in Christ that the soul has access to God. This *mediation* is possible through the perfect and complete humanity of Christ, which is a concrete and tangible humanity, a real body.⁸⁰ Gregory expresses this, for example, when he affirms that Christ merits the name “apple” because the colours of white and red evoke the flesh and blood of the humanity that he has assumed.⁸¹

The mediation of Christ in man’s union with God that appears in this text is an issue that is very present in various ways throughout the *In Canticum*. As an example, it suffices to allude to the entire subject of *being clothed in Christ* through participation in his death and resurrection,⁸² or to the subject of being converted into the *good odour of Christ* because “Jesus himself is born in those who receive him, and within them grows in age, wisdom and grace”.⁸³ This being the case, it is not without reason that this notion has been considered by some authors to be a key element of Gregory’s “mystical doctrine”.⁸⁴

In the context of the spousal relation between the soul and the Word, there is also *Homily XI*, in which Gregory comments on the first verses of the nocturnal song of Ct 5.2–8. The Christological dimension of the spiritual life and knowledge of God is evoked at various times throughout the *Homily*;⁸⁵ but, it is in his

78 Cf. S. Coakley, “‘Mingling’ in Gregory of Nyssa’s Christology”, 78–79.

79 Cf. M. Canévet, “Saint Grégoire de Nyse”, *DSp* 6, 999.

80 Cf. M. Brugarolas, “La mediación de Cristo en Gregorio de Nisa”, *Scripta Theologica* 49 (2017) 301–326.

81 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 125,17–20).

82 Cf. *Cant* VIII (GNO VI 249,13–250,7).

83 Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 96,7–10).

84 Cf. M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nyse et l’herméneutique biblique*, 243–246; 276–287; L.F. Mateo-Seco, “La cristología del *In Canticum Canticum*”, 189, which clearly states: “all the mystical doctrine on union with Christ is based on his character as Mediator, and the nature of this mediation is based on the strict and radical dependence on the fact that in Christ two abysses are joined”.

85 For example, when speaking about the names that the Bridegroom uses to call his beloved (cf. *Cant* XI [GNO VI 324,13–325,17]), or in explaining the meaning of the Bride’s tunic (cf. *Cant* XI [GNO VI 327,8–329,1]).

commentary on Ct 5.4 (*Dilectus meus misit manum suam per foramen, et venter meus commotus est in ipsum*), where Gregory introduces a small *excursus* dedicated expressly to the Incarnation. For Gregory, the hand of the Bridegroom that touches the door of the Bride's house is an image of the descent of the Word to the life of men:

I think that the bride's house represents the whole of human life, and thus the hand that creates all beings, has contracted itself to reside in our small, worthless human existence, by participating in our human nature *in everything like us except sin* (Heb 4.15), and by being among us produces dread and astonishment in our souls. How is God manifested in flesh? (cf. 1Tim 3.16) How does the Word become flesh? (cf. Jn 1.14) How does birth come about in virginity, and virginity in a mother? How is the light mixed in with darkness, and the life mingled with dead? How can the limited aperture of [human] life receive in him the hand that contains all things, by which the whole of heaven and earth is measured, and all the water is contained?⁸⁶

The dynamism of this paragraph, as seen in the Biblical citations referenced, especially Jn 1.14, moves in the same line as the text that we commented on earlier: it is the Word who takes the initiative to lower himself to human life.⁸⁷ However, now the accent is not on the kenotic aspect of the incarnation, but rather on its character as ineffable mystery. The distance between the Creator Word—that hand that creates all beings—and the existence of man is an abyss, and for this reason the Incarnation produces astonishment and surprise in the

86 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 338,2–14): οἶμαι γὰρ οἶκον νοεῖσθαι τῆς νύμφης πᾶσαν τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ζωὴν, ταύτῃ δὲ τὴν χεῖρα τὴν πάντων τῶν ὄντων ποιητικὴν ἐνδημήσασαν πρὸς τὸ βραχὺ τε καὶ οὐτιδανὸν τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου βίου ἐαυτὴν συστεῖλαι διὰ τοῦ μετασχεῖν τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν Κατὰ πάντα καθ' ὁμοιότητα χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας, ἐν ἡμῖν δὲ γενομένην θρόησιν ἐμπούησαι καὶ ξενισμόν ταῖς ψυχαῖς· πῶς ὁ θεὸς ἐν σαρκὶ φανεροῦται; πῶς ὁ λόγος γίνεται σὰρξ; πῶς ἐν παρθενίᾳ τόκος καὶ ἐν μητρὶ παρθενία; πῶς τῷ σκότει τὸ φῶς καταμίγνυται καὶ τῷ θανάτῳ ἡ ζωὴ κατακίρναται; πῶς χωρεῖ ἡ βραχεῖα τοῦ βίου τρυμαλιὰ τὴν περιεκτικὴν πάντων τῶν ὄντων χεῖρα ἐν ἐαυτῇ δέξασθαι, ἢ πᾶς ὁ οὐρανὸς ἐκμετρεῖται καὶ ἡ γῆ πᾶσα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ ἅπαν ἐμπεριέχεται.

87 Note the distinct way in which Gregory refers to the life of man: the house of the Bride is the image of the whole of human life (ζωή), and the Word descends to man's existence (βίος). For the Nyssen, the Incarnation not only implies the assumption of a perfect humanity, but also means taking on the life and the history of men. This has important consequences for the spiritual life of the Christian, which consists in imitating (μίμησις) the life of Christ. Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, "Christology", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 141; cf. G. Maspero, "Life", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 438–446.

Bride. The astonishment of the Bride is a sign of the wonder that is produced by the *manifestation* of God in the flesh, and it is thus because, in Christ, the infinity of God and the humility of the flesh are united in an ineffable way.

Gregory emphasises the paradoxical character of the mystery of the incarnation through which, in Christ, opposing realities such as the birth from a Virgin,⁸⁸ light and darkness, and life and death are united. The conjunction of the contraries and its paradoxical meaning, far from being an absurdity, constitutes a source of knowledge and authentic revelation of God.⁸⁹ Gregory expresses it as follows:

Therefore, it makes sense, that the Bride, speaking as a prophet, signifies under the figure of the [Bridegroom's] hand the grace of the gospel. Indeed, when the Lord was seen on earth and conversed with men, we become aware of the pure and immaterial beauty of the Bridegroom, of the deity of the Word, and of the splendour of the true light, by the activities of his hand. For we understand that hand as the effective power of the wonders by which the dead were restored to life, sight was restored to the blind, the suffering of the lepers was dissipated and every kind of incurable and severe illness was dismissed from bodies at his command.⁹⁰

Gregory, in previous paragraphs, had interpreted the hand of the Bridegroom as the hand of Him who is known for his creation, or said in reverse, as the marvels of the creation that reveal to the Bride the Hand of the Creator.⁹¹ On

88 Gregory, who, from the beginning of *In Canticum* emphasises the perfect humanity of Christ, deals extensively with his virginal birth in *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 387–388). Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, “La mariología en San Gregorio de Nisa”, *Scripta Theologica* 10 (1978) 431–433; M. Gordillo, “La virginidad trascendente de María Madre de Dios en san Gregorio de Nisa”, *Estudios Marianos* 21 (1960) 117–155.

89 G. Maspero, “Cant”, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 122.

90 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 338,15–339,4): εἰκὸς τοίνυν τὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου χάριν διὰ τοῦ τῆς χειρὸς αἰνιγματὸς προφητικῶς ἡμῖν ὑπὸ τῆς νύμφης διασημαίνεσθαι· ὅτε γὰρ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ὥφθη καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις συναναστρέφῃ ὁ κύριος, τὸ καθαρὸν τε καὶ ἄϋλον τοῦ νυμφίου κάλλος καὶ τὴν τοῦ λόγου θεότητα καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ φωτὸς λαμπρότητα διὰ τῆς τῶν ἐνεργειῶν χειρὸς ἐγνωρίσαμεν· χεῖρα γὰρ νοοῦμεν τὴν τῶν θαυμάτων ἀπεργαστικὴν αὐτοῦ δύναμιν, δι’ ἧς ἐξωποιοῦντο μὲν οἱ νεκροὶ καὶ τῶν τυφλῶν αἱ ὄψεις ἀποκαθίσταντο καὶ τὸ τῆς λέπρας πάθος ἐφυγαδεύετο καὶ πᾶν εἶδος ἀνιάτου καὶ χαλεπῆς ἀρρωστίας ἀπεχώρει τῶν σωμάτων διὰ προσταγματος.

91 Cf. *Cant* XI (GNO VI 334,15–337,21). M. Laird observes that with this interpretation, Gregory, seems to make a statement about an authentic awareness of God through creation: although divine nature remains ineffable and cannot be understood, something of God can be known through his operations. Cf. M. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith. Union, knowledge and divine presence*, Oxford 2004, 134.

this occasion, the same hand of the Bridegroom is understood as “the gift of the Gospel”, through which, seeing the marvels done by the Word on earth, the splendour of his divinity is revealed to us. Both interpretations—the works of creation and the works of salvation—move in same line as the “communication” of God to man “by the activities of his Hand” (διὰ τῆς τῶν ἐνεργειῶν χειρὸς). In the case of the Incarnation, the effective and saving power by which Christ restores life reveals to us the divinity of the Word and, inseparably, bring us salvation. In other words, the Hand of the Bridegroom reaches humanity and manifests the power of his divinity returning the life that was lost, opening the eyes of the blind and curing the sicknesses that afflicted mankind; this is the great mystery of the Gospel.⁹²

The soteriological character of the Incarnate Word’s action, which is noted in the previous text, leads us to an essential aspect of Gregory’s Christology which also appears in the way in which Gregory describes the “descent”: the salvation of man is the reason for the Incarnation. This can be seen in this excerpt of the final homily of the *In Canticum*:

When we hear *cognatus meus descendit in hortum suum* (Ct 6.1), we learn the mystery of the gospel, whose each word reveals to us its mystical sense. The God, made manifest in the flesh (cf. 1Tim 3.16), who arose from Judah (cf. Heb 7.14), and who brought light to the nations sitting in darkness and the shadow of death (Lk 1.79), is rightly and appropriately called with the name “brother” by the one who has been betrothed to him for an everlasting union, since she is a “sister”⁹³ of the people of Judah. The expression *descendit* is used because of the one who *descended from Jerusalem to Jericho* and fell among robbers (Lk 10.30), the Word, comes to

92 It is interesting to read the descent of the Word to the humility of human existence described in this passage in parallel with those texts in which Gregory says that through the Incarnation God has descended to our eyes and hearings. Cf. *Arium* (GNO III/1 73); cf. *Beat* II 5–6 (GNO VII/2 90–91).

93 In this text, the Bride is called “sister” (ἀδελφή) of Christ, son of the tribe of Judah, with an obvious Christological meaning. In other places, this name is interpreted in relation to questions of a moral nature. In *Homily* XI, Gregory explains that the name “sister” is appropriate for the Bride (Ct 5.2) through her fulfilment of the will of the Word. Gregory puts these words in the mouth of the Bridegroom: “you must become my sister by accepting my will on your soul” (*Cant* XI [GNO VI 325,4–7]). In *Homily* VIII, in contrast, Gregory sees the words of Ct 4.9 as being said by the angels. The Bride having been glorified by the Word, shines with the attribute of “impassibility” (ἀπάθεια) just like the spiritual powers, and thus the Bride is elevated to a sort of “sisterly relationship” with the angels and incorporeal beings (cf. *Cant* VIII [GNO VI 254,1–8]).

the aid of him who had fallen into the hands of the enemy, which signifies that the condescension was from his ineffable majesty to the humility of our nature.⁹⁴

Referring to the parable of the Good Samaritan, Gregory explains the *katabasis* of the Word from his infinite majesty as an authentic *synkatabasis* in favour of man, who had fallen in the hands of his enemies. That is, the descent of the Word is a descent of love, authentic divine “condescension”. Indeed, the Incarnation—as J. Daniélou has emphasised—is the union of the Word not merely with human nature as such, but with fallen nature, the *sarx*, which is characterised by death.⁹⁵ The Word, by the Incarnation, has assumed humanity unto its ultimate consequences. Thus, the ultimate reason for all of Christology, for the entire life of Christ, is *philanthropy*. In fact, Gregory is clear in his attribution of this divine title to Christ: “your name has become love for humankind”.⁹⁶ In the same way Gregory stresses both, that the Word is the Good Shepherd who has carried all of humanity on his shoulders;⁹⁷ and that the entire economy of salvation is summed up in the parable of the Good Samaritan.⁹⁸ The Word has become our “brother”, in order to take humanity upon himself and free it from the helplessness in which the enemy of human nature has left us.⁹⁹ *Philanthropy* is, then, the reason for the Incarnation and, following J. Daniélou, the reason for the death on the cross; thus, divine *philanthropy* is a *philanthropy* unto death.¹⁰⁰

94 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 436,2–16): οὐκοῦν ὅταν ἀκούσωμεν ὅτι Ἀδελφιδὸς μου κατέβη εἰς κήπον αὐτοῦ, τὸ εὐαγγελικὸν μυστήριον διὰ τῶν εἰρημένων μανθάνομεν ἐκάστου τῶν ὀνομάτων τούτων τὸν μυστικὸν λόγον ἡμῖν σαφηνίζοντος· ὁ ἐν σαρκὶ φανερωθεὶς θεὸς διὰ τὸ ἐξ Ἰουδα μὲν ἀνατεῖλαι, λάμπει δὲ τοῖς ἔθνεσι τοῖς ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου καθημένοις καλῶς καὶ προσφυῶς τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ ἀδελφίδου παρὰ τῆς μνηστευθείσης αὐτῷ πρὸς αἰθὶον συζυγίαν κατονομάζεται ἀδελφῆς οὔσης τοῦ ἐξ Ἰουδα λαοῦ, τὸ δὲ Κατέβη δηλοῖ ὅτι διὰ τὸν ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων εἰς Ἱερὶχώ καταβάντα καὶ ἐν τοῖς λησταῖς γενόμενον ἄνθρωπον καὶ αὐτὸς τῇ καθόδῳ τοῦ ἐμπεσόντος τοῖς πολεμίοις συγκατέρχεται, δι’ ὧν σημαίνει τὴν ἐκ τῆς ἀφράστου μεγαλειότητος γενομένην ἐπὶ τὸ ταπεινὸν τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν συγκατάβασιν.

95 J. Daniélou—H. Musurillo, *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, 16–17.

96 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 107,4–5): ᾧ ὄνομα ἡ φιλανθρωπία ἐγένετο.

97 Cf. *Cant II* (GNO VI 61,1–62,13).

98 Cf. *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 426,9–429,11).

99 Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, “La cristología del *In Canticum Canticorum*”, 179–180.

100 As L.F. Mateo-Seco has observed, in *In Canticum* Gregory of Nyssa utilises—although without pausing to explain—the sacrificial language that appears in other works when he addresses the priesthood of Christ. Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, “La cristología del *In Canticum Canticorum*”, 188.

Philanthropic reason, as seen in Gregory's reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan, is decisive for understanding how Gregory speaks about the assumption of human nature by the Word. That is, Gregory's Christology cannot be explained apart from its soteriological meaning. J.-R. Bouchet states that to understand the *μῆξις* of natures in Christ that Gregory speaks about, it is necessary to do so from his essential philanthropic dimension. When Gregory talks about *natures*, it is always divine nature, pure, full of love, and human nature, sinful, blind, separated from life.¹⁰¹ The title that E. Moutsoulas gave to his studies of Gregory's Christology summarizes this aspect well: *the Incarnation of the Word and the theosis of Man*.¹⁰² In Gregory, one cannot separate incarnation and divinisation, just as one cannot understand the "first fruits" apart from the "whole dough",¹⁰³ nor the "Good Shepherd" without the "whole sheep" that are restored upon his shoulders.¹⁰⁴ Suffice it to cite a few words from the *Or cat* that leave no room for doubt about the saving meaning of the Incarnation:

Christ did not suffer death because he had been born; rather, it was because of death that he chose to be born. Eternal Life had no need of life, but he entered our bodily existence in order to restore us from death to life [...] Indeed he came so close to death as to touch mortality itself, that he might make of our own nature, in his body, a principle of resurrection.¹⁰⁵

One could quote many other texts in which Gregory describes the saving initiative of the Word in his descent towards the humility of our nature. Nevertheless, those that we have seen are sufficiently expressive with respect to three impor-

101 Cf. J.-R. Bouchet, "Le vocabulaire de l'union", 546. In addition, J.-R. Bouchet, in a short article dedicated to the celebrated Christological image of the drop of vinegar united with the water of the ocean, shows the economic meaning that it encloses, which is essential for understanding it correctly. Cf. J.-R. Bouchet, "A propos d'une image christologique de Grégoire de Nysse", 584–588.

102 Cf. E.D. Moutsoulas, *The Incarnation of the Word and the theosis of Man according to the teaching of Gregory of Nyssa*, Athens 2000.

103 Cf. J. Zachhuber, "Phyrama", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 612–614.

104 J. Daniélou, commenting on these images, states as follows: "Some scholars have wrongly thought that Gregory is here teaching that the Word has hypostatically united with all humanity; but it is clear from a good number of texts that he is merely emphasizing, in a very real sense, the solidarity of all mankind" (J. Daniélou, *From Glory to Glory*, 17–18). Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, *Estudios sobre la Cristología*, 53.

105 *Or cat* 32 (GNO III/4 84; tr. Daniélou, *From Glory to Glory*, 16–17).

tant aspects: the veracity of the *kenosis*, the “mystery” of the *epiphany* of God in the flesh, and the *saving* principle of the Incarnation.

4 The Unity of Christ and the *communicatio idiomatum*

Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the Christology of *In Canticum* is Gregory’s emphasis on the unity of the divine and the human in Christ. Certainly, the manner in which this unity is described constitutes one of the most complex Christological problems, not only due to what Gregory says but also because of the moment in history in which he finds himself.

B. Daley, who has rightly stressed the fundamental soteriological dimension of Gregory’s Christology, observes that Gregory is not concerned with elaborating a speculative Christology regarding the union of natures in Christ. For Daley, Gregory does not go into the identification of what in Christ is one and what is distinct.¹⁰⁶ This, which in some way would excuse the “weakness” of Gregory’s vocabulary, who speaks of a “mixture” of natures,¹⁰⁷ could be considered, as J. Zachhuber has observed, an assessment of Gregory’s thought from the Christology of the fifth century.¹⁰⁸ At the time in which Gregory is writing, Christology is still in the first stages of its development and thus, the fact that its fruits remain incipient and imperfect does not mean that speculative interest—and development—regarding the mystery of Christ is absent.

In this sense, the Christological *excursus* of *Homily XIII* is a good testimony of the profundity of Gregory’s Christology and encourages a reconsideration of his contribution to Christology.¹⁰⁹ The text, which is typical of Gregory in its content and its form, begins with a clear affirmation of the distinction between the created and the uncreated in Christ.

In Christ there is that which is uncreated and that which is created. That which is uncreated of Him—we say—is eternal, and prior to the ages, and

106 Cf. B.E. Daley, “Divine Transcendence and Human Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa’s Anti-Apollinarian Christology”, 95.

107 The terms “μίξις”, “κρᾶσις” and their compounds.

108 Cf. J. Zachhuber, “Contra Eunomium III 4”, 313–334.

109 A. Ojell has noted that recent studies in the Christological area tend to more highly value—not always with justification—the contribution of Gregory Nazianzus over that of Gregory de Nyssa. Cf. A. Ojell, *One Word, One Body, One Voice. Studies in Apophatic Theology and Christocentric Anthropology in Gregory of Nyssa*, Helsinki 2007, 29 nt. 48.

creator of all beings; on the other hand, that which is created has been conformed to the humility of our body in accordance with the economy for our sakes.¹¹⁰

The radical division between the created and the uncreated, expounded here in an unmistakable way, constitutes one of the pillars of Gregory's thought. It is a distinction that plays an essential role not only in Gregory's Trinitarian theology, but also in his conception of the spiritual ascent and the transcendence of the Infinite.¹¹¹ The gap between the uncreated and the created does not allow for any kind of intermediate being, just as Gregory argues with clarity against Eunomius, and as is reflected in the way he understands the presence of the divine and the human in Christ. What is uncreated and what is created in Christ remains united, but distinct and without confusion.

By no means does Gregory understand the union of natures in Christ as a *synthesis* between them, which would give rise to an intermediate and compound *tertium quid*, an ἀνθρωποθεος, which would be neither true God nor true man.¹¹² According to D. Balás, "this rejection of an 'Intermediary' (μέσον) is actually a presupposition of Gregory's well-developed theology of the 'Mediator' (μεσίτης): the incarnate Logos, truly God and truly man, assuming humanity ('man') not by necessity of nature but out of free φιλανθρωπία".¹¹³ In short, the Incarnate Word is not mediator because he occupies an intermediate position between God and creation, in the style of Eunomian thinking; rather, he is mediator because he is at the same time consubstantial with the Father in divinity and consubstantial¹¹⁴ with us in humanity.¹¹⁵

Gregory continues the *excursus* supporting his explanation with the words of Scripture themselves:

-
- 110 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 380,15–20): ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὸ μὲν κτιστὸν ἐστὶ τὸ δὲ ἄκτιστον λέγομεν δὲ ἄκτιστον μὲν εἶναι αὐτοῦ τὸ αἰδιόν τε καὶ προαιώνιον καὶ ποιητικὸν πάντων τῶν ὄντων, κτιστὸν δὲ τὸ κατὰ τὴν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν οἰκονομίαν συσχηματισθέν τῷ σώματι τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν.
- 111 This has been emphasised by M. Canévet: the ontological opposition between uncreated nature and created nature—the infinite abyss between the two—is the basis of the need for indefinite spiritual progress. Cf. M. Canévet, "Exégèse et théologie", 150.
- 112 Cf. J.-R. Bouchet, "Le vocabulaire de l'union", 540.
- 113 D.L. Balás, *Μετουσια Θεου. Man's participation in God's perfections according to saint Gregory of Nyssa*, Rome 1966, 52.
- 114 Remember, for example, Gregory's words commenting on Ct 2.3 (*As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my kinsman among the sons*): The Word—the apple tree—"being of wood, it is consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος) to man's nature, tested in all things like ourselves *apart from sin* (Heb 4.14)", *Cant* IV (GNO VI 116,17–117,1).
- 115 Cf. *Eun* I 297–298 (GNO I 114,5–19); cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, "La cristología del *In Canticum Cantorum*", 185.

But it would be better to set out our understanding of this matter by means of the divine words themselves: “uncreated” we call the *Word*, *who was in the beginning, he was always with God and was God, through him all things were made and without him nothing was made* (Jn 1.1–3); “created” we call the One who *became flesh and dwelt*¹¹⁶ *among us*, in him, even made flesh, shines the glory of God, and reveals that God has been *manifested in flesh* (1 Tim 3.16), the Onlybegotten in all ways (παντῶς) God, who is in the bosom of the Father. John said of him, *we have seen his glory* (Jn 1.14), and what was observable was the man, nevertheless what was made known through him, says John, was the *glory, as of the Onlybegotten of the Father, full of grace and truth* (Jn 1.14). Thus, in Christ, that which is uncreated, eternal, existing before the ages, is completely inexpressible and incomprehensible to all created intellects. Yet that which was revealed in the flesh can to a certain extent be grasped by human understanding [...]. What I am chiefly referring to here is the great mystery of piety, by which God was revealed to us in the flesh (cf. 1 Tim 3.16), he who was *in the form of God* (Phil 2.6) lived with men through the flesh in *the form of a slave*. And since he, once for all, by the sacrifice of first fruits, had reunited to himself the mortal substance of the flesh (τὴν ἐπίκληρον τῆς σαρκὸς φύσιν)—which he had received from an immaculate Virgin—, he continued to sanctify the common dough of mankind through its first fruits.¹¹⁷

In this text, in which the Biblical citations and the Christological affirmations seem to be perfectly blended, Gregory brings together many important Christo-

116 R.A. Norris translates “tabernacled among us” in relation to *Cant II* (GNO VI 44): “the flesh is the ‘tent’ in which the Deity ‘tabernacles’”, cf. R.A. Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, 401, nt. 18.

117 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 380,20–381,22): μάλλον δὲ δι’ αὐτῶν τῶν θείων ῥημάτων τὴν περὶ τούτου διανοίαν βέλτιον ἂν εἴη παραθέσθαι τῷ λόγῳ· ἄκτιστον λέγομεν τὸν ἐν ἀρχῇ ὄντα λόγον καὶ αἰετὸς πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὄντα καὶ θεὸν ὄντα λόγον, τὸν δι’ οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο καὶ οὐ χωρὶς τῶν γεγονότων ἔστιν οὐδὲν, κτιστὸν δὲ τὸν σάρκα γενόμενον καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν σκηνώσαντα, οὗ καὶ σαρκωθέντος ἡ ἐμφανισμένη δόξα δηλοῖ, ὅτι Θεὸς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί, θεὸς δὲ πάντως ὁ μονογενής, ὁ ἐν τοῖς κόλποις ὢν τοῦ πατρὸς, οὕτως εἰπόντος τοῦ Ἰωάννου ὅτι Ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καίτοι τὸ φαινόμενον ἄνθρωπος ἦν, ἀλλὰ τὸ δι’ αὐτοῦ γνωριζόμενον Δόξαν φησὶν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας ἐπειδὴ τοῖνον τὸ μὲν ἄκτιστον αὐτοῦ καὶ προαιώνιον καὶ ἀίδιον ἀληπτον μένει καθ’ ὅλου πάσῃ φύσει καὶ ἀνεκφώνητον, τὸ δὲ διὰ σαρκὸς ἡμῖν φανερωθὲν δύναται ποσῶς καὶ εἰς γνῶσιν ἐλθεῖν [...] λέγω δὲ Τὸ μέγα τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον, δι’ οὗ ὁ θεὸς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί, ὁ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων καὶ τῷ δουλικῷ προσωπεῖω διὰ σαρκὸς συναναστραφεὶς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ὃς ἐπειδὴ ἅπας πρὸς ἑαυτὸν διὰ τῆς ἀπαρχῆς ἐπεσπάσατο τὴν ἐπίκληρον τῆς σαρκὸς φύσιν, ἣν διὰ τῆς ἀφθόρου παρθενίας ἀνέλαβεν, αἰετὶ τῇ ἀπαρχῇ συναγιάζει τὸ κοινὸν τῆς φύσεως φύραμα.

logical statements and very personal nuances of his thought; for example: the conception of humanity as a whole that the Word takes upon himself in the incarnation; the body of Christ understood as “the first fruits” of this humanity, which he sanctifies and which he makes participant in his incorruptibility through his own body; both the explicit mention of the virginal conception and the concrete reality—fleshly and mortal—of Christ’s human *physis*;¹¹⁸ and the irreversibility with which the Word took humanity upon himself.¹¹⁹

In any case, perhaps what shines the most is the clear use of the language referring to Christ. The application to Christ of the attributes of his divine nature and of his human nature is done with precision. The Word that in his divine nature, is eternal, ineffable and incomprehensible, is—in the human, through the Incarnation—created and visible; he lived among men and he united himself to our mortal nature. The attributes of each nature are without confusion; and, in being applied to the Word, the difference between the two natures is maintained like two abysses that cannot be mixed. Conversely, the text also shows the very close union of the divine and the human in Christ. This can be seen in Gregory’s exegesis of Jn 1.14. In the same flesh of Christ is manifested, in a certain sense, the Glory of the Only-Begotten Son, while it was man that was manifested, it was the glory of God that was known through him.

This is a good example of how Gregory practices what later would be called *communicatio idiomatum*. As L.F. Mateo-Seco has observed, the *communicatio idiomatum* is applied here in an adjusted way, including in the use of gender: masculine referring to the person and neutral referring to the natures.¹²⁰ Logically, one does not find in Gregory a theorisation of the *communicatio idiomatum* based on a consideration of the hypostatic union in the abstract.¹²¹

118 In this text, one can notice the complexity of Gregory of Nyssa’s soteriology. The realism with which he describes the Incarnation, far from generating a mechanical conception of salvation—be it of a spiritualistic or physical nature—, shows that God has effected salvation while adapting his action to the being of man in his totality, in his corporality and freedom. Thanks to the communion and kinship (κοινωνία, συγγενεία) of natures between Christ and men, salvation is a ἀναγέννησις by means of which man’s life is incorporated into that of Christ through μίμησις and sacramental life (*Or cat* 35 [GNO III/4 91]). Salvation’s ontological reality corresponds to the Incarnation’s ontological reality: in the same way that the Incarnation is not an extrinsic or Docetic reality, salvation cannot be Docetically or extrinsically conceived. About the soteriology of Gregory, see: L.F. Mateo-Seco, *Estudios sobre la Cristología*, 229–260.

119 Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, “Notas sobre el lenguaje cristológico de Gregorio de Nisa”, 101.

120 Cf. *ibidem*.

121 Cf. J.-R. Bouchet, “Le vocabulaire de l’union”, 579–580: “Il ne s’agit donc pas de communication des idiomes au sens classique. La perspective est beaucoup plus ‘économique’. Elle

Nevertheless, its practical use is present in such a notable way in his writings, both dogmatic and spiritual,¹²² that his Christology cannot be properly evaluated without giving this language its proper importance.¹²³

It is worth pausing for a moment to look at the beginning of the treatise *De Perfectione*, where this can be seen in a particularly clear way. There Gregory offers a long list of the names of Christ, including names referring to his humanity and names referring to his person, such as “Wisdom of God” or “Only-Begotten Son”, and concludes as follows: “Since all these names are related to each other, the understanding of each one by itself contributes to manifest its meaning and gives us a certain manifestation of the significance of Christ’s name in as much as we can comprehend for showing God’s ineffable greatness.”¹²⁴

Gregory, who is concerned with the exactitude of words,¹²⁵ with this language manifests the acuteness of his Christological thinking in a particularly eloquent way. The language of communication of idioms is a logical expression of Christ’s ontological reality. The fact that the ontology of Christ in Gregory of Nyssa is in an incipient phase of development and could be formally imprecise does not mean that the use of *communicatio idiomatum* constitutes a merely verbal expression—a rhetorical figure of speech—without any ontological significance. On the contrary, it is impossible to separate Scripture from ontology in the consideration of the mystery of Christ.¹²⁶

est plus soucieuse de montrer le rapport des deux natures que l’attribution des propriétés de l’une à l’autre en raison de l’union hypostatique abstraitement prise”.

122 Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, “Notas sobre el lenguaje cristológico de Gregorio de Nisa”, 97–103.

123 It does not seem that J.N.D. Kelly is right when he states that Gregory does not use the habitual language of the *communicatio idiomatum* in a natural way, cf. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 300. For an extensive study of *communicatio idiomatum*, see: G. Strzelczyk, *Communicatio Idiomatum: Lo scambio delle proprietà. Storia, status quaestionis e prospettive*, Roma 2004. It is apropos to mention that Gregory in *Eun* III/3 37 (GNO II 120) elaborates, continuing his ponderation of Acts 2.36, an incipient theorization of the rules of communication of idioms (cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, “Notas sobre el lenguaje cristológico de Gregorio de Nisa”, 106).

124 *Perf* (GNO VIII/1 175.14–176.11); tr. C. McCambley, “Saint Gregory of Nyssa. *On Perfection*”, *GOTR* 29 (1984) 361.

125 Recall, for example, the beginning of the *Antirrh* in which he blames Apollinaris for his intentional use of the term *σάρκωσις* (*Antirrh* [GNO III/1 132–135]); or his criticism of Eunomius for manipulating language to introduce his doctrines (cf. *Eun* I 155–162 [GNO I 73.16–75.24]; E. Vandebussche, “La part de la dialectique dans la théologie d’Eunomius ‘le Technologue’”, *RHE* 40 [1944/45] 47–72).

126 In point of fact, Chalcedon—and later the contribution of John Damascene—clearly made the metaphysical repercussions of *communicatio idiomatum* explicit. In this sense, one might say that John Damascene extends and clarifies the trajectory of Origen and

Thus it is important to understand Gregory's most "obscure" Christological references from the perspective of his use of *communicatio idiomatum*.¹²⁷

5 The Name of Christ and the Wonder of Contraries

Gregory's practice of *communicatio idiomatum* shines with great force if one keeps in mind the importance that he gives to the topic of the name, and concretely to the name of Christ.¹²⁸

Gregory elaborates a Christology of the "name" that is in perfect harmony with his apophatic theology and his doctrine regarding the names of God. The Christology of the "name" also has important implications for Gregory's understanding of the spiritual life of the Christian. In *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium*, Gregory, in a precious exercise of the *communicatio idiomatum*, does what could be rightly labelled a *communicatio nominum*:

Now the human side of Christ, in accordance with normal human custom, was named by a particular name which he had received through the revelation made by Gabriel to the maiden, and the name of his humanity, as has been said, was Jesus. His divine nature, however, cannot be expressed by a name but the two [the divine and human natures] became one through their co-mingling (διὰ τῆς ἀνακράσεως). For that reason God receives his name from his humanity. *For at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow* (cf. Phil 2.10), and a man becomes *above every name*. This is a distinctive feature of the deity which cannot be expressed by means of a particular designation. The aim is that what is lofty came to be lowly, so what is lowly should put on lofty titles. As the deity is named through the

Gregory of Nyssa. Hence, reducing *communicatio idiomatum* to a mere issue of the logic of language, as nominalism did, would imply extracting the content of the patristic Christology as well as that of the Christology of the New Testament. Concerning this matter, see: J. Auer, *Jesucristo hijo de Dios e hijo de María*, Barcelona 1989, 394–403; W. Pannenberg, *Jesus- God and Man*, Philadelphia 1977, 297–304.

127 Origen has been called "the theologian of the communication of languages" (see, for example, the important text *De Principiis* 11 6,3 [SC 252, 314–316]; cf. H. Crouzel—M. Simonetti, *Origène. Traité des Principes. 11: Commentaire et fragments*, SC 253, Paris 1978, 176–177; F. Ocáriz—L.F. Mateo-Seco—J.A. Riestra, *El Misterio de Jesucristo*, Pamplona 2010, 176). Probably after him, it would not be an exaggeration to include Gregory of Nyssa among those who developed *communicatio idiomatum* in its first stages (cf. A. Michel, "Communication des idiomes", *DThC* VII, col. 596).

128 Cf. G. Maspero, *Trinity and Man. Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabium*, 125–147.

man, so that which has been raised up to the deity from its lowly state, acquires a *name which is above every name*.¹²⁹

This beautiful and powerful text perfectly frames the issues of divine ineffability and the name of Christ, and “suggests that Gregory held a stronger, rather than a weaker, sense of the unity of Christ”.¹³⁰ The argument is very clear: the Word that is beyond every name, through the Incarnation, has a human name. The Word continues to be ineffable, but he has united himself with man in such a way that he has a name that can be pronounced and by which he can be known. This recalls Gregory’s exegesis of the words of Ct 1.3, *unquentum effusum nomen tuum*; with the human name of the Word we refer to “a slight remnant of the vapor of the divine fragrance”.¹³¹

The force with which Gregory states that the Word has received a human name does not do violence to his apophatic theology nor does it contradict the ineffability of God, which is one of the principal arguments against Eunomius.¹³² The Word—like the Father—is beyond all knowledge and all words. This *communicatio* of names is expression of a Christology that is perfectly consistent with Gregory’s apophatism: He who receives the name is ineffable, and the name itself is elevated above every name. With this, Gregory places us in front of the paradox of the very mystery of Christ.

The union of natures is extremely close without becoming a mixture. Thanks to the Incarnation, the ineffable of the divinity can be named with the proper name, Jesus, at the same time that the human name is elevated to divinity.¹³³ This elevation of the humanity of Jesus toward the divinity—“man above every name” (ἄνθρωπος ὑπὲρ ὄνομα γίνετα)—also leads ones to think that Christ is a

129 *Antirrh* 22 (GNO III/1 161,16–26; tr. Meredith, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 58): καὶ ἐπειδὴ ὁ κατὰ Χριστὸν ἄνθρωπος κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἀκολουθίαν ὀνόματι κατὰ τὸ ἰδιάζον προσηγορεύθη διὰ τῆς γενομένης τῇ παρθένῳ παρὰ τοῦ Γαβριὴλ μυσταγωγίας καὶ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον, καθὼς εἴρηται, Ἰησοῦς ὠνομάσθη, ἡ δὲ θεία φύσις ἀπεριλήπτως ἐστὶν ὀνόματι, ἐν δὲ τὰ δύο διὰ τῆς ἀνακράσεως γέγονε· τοῦτου χάριν καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου κατονομάζεται. ἐν γὰρ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψει καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὑπὲρ ὄνομα γίνετα, ὅπερ ἰδιὸν ἐστὶ τῆς θεότητος τῆς δηλωθῆναι μὴ δυναμένης ὑπὸ τίνος ὀνομαστικῆς σημασίας, ἵν’ ὥσπερ ἐν τῷ ταπεινῷ τὸ ὑψηλὸν γίνετα, οὕτως ἀντιλάβη τὸ ταπεινὸν τὰ ὑψηλὰ ἰδιώματα· ὥς γὰρ διὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὀνομάζεται ἡ θεότης, οὕτως ὑπὲρ ὄνομα γίνετα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ ταπεινοῦ συνεπαρθὲν τῇ θεότητι.

130 A. Meredith, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 150.

131 *Cant* 1 (GNO VI 37,6).

132 Cf. G. Maspero, *Essere e relazione. L'ontologia trinitaria di Gregorio di Nissa*, Roma 2013, 79–85.

133 Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, “Kenosis, Exaltación de Cristo y Apocatástasis en la exégesis a Filipenses 2,5–11 de S. Gregorio de Nisa”, *Scripta Theologica* 3 (1971) 325.

perfect man, but is not a *common man* (*vulgaris homo*).¹³⁴ One sees this, for example, in the long paragraphs of *Homily XIII* where Gregory discusses the virgin birth.¹³⁵ For Gregory, it was not the Word that was made slave to nature, but it was nature that was placed at the service of the dignity of the One who inserted himself into human life.¹³⁶

This magnificent example of *communicatio idiomatum* agrees with what Gregory says in *Homily VIII* of *In Canticum*, commenting on the revelation of the *multiform wisdom of God* (Eph 3.10–12). In this text, Gregory explains that *multiform wisdom* is the revelation of the economy of salvation through the “marvel” of the “contraries” that God has accomplished in Christ:

For he [Paul] says somewhere in writing to the Ephesians—where he explains to us the great economy of salvation through the epiphany of God in the flesh—that not only was human nature instructed by grace in the divine mysteries, but that *God’s manifold wisdom* was also revealed to the heavenly *principalities and powers* through the same economy which Christ manifested to men. [...] It is indeed *through the church* that the *manifold wisdom of God* is made known to these supramundane powers, for the *wisdom of God* works great wonders through things that are quite the contrary. How is that life comes through death, justice through sin, praise through malediction, glory through dishonour, strength through weakness? In earlier times these celestial powers were familiar only with the regular and uniform operation of the divine wisdom as it worked miracles in accordance with its nature. [...]

But that *manifold* quality of the divine wisdom, which arises by the union of opposites, has only now been clearly revealed to them *through the Church*: how the Word becomes flesh, the Life is mingled with death, in his bruises our wound is healed, the infirmity of the cross brings down the power of the adversary, the invisible is revealed in the flesh, the captives are ransomed, he himself is both purchaser and price (for he gave himself to death as a ransom for us), he is in the throes of death and does not depart from life, he is sent into slavery and remains a King.¹³⁷

134 Cf. *Antirrh* 21 (GNO III/1160,9–10).

135 Cf. *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 387–389).

136 Cf. M. Aubienau, *Grégoire de Nysse. Traité de la Virginité*, 161–164.

137 *Cant* VIII (GNO VI 254,10–256,5): φησί γάρ που τῶν ἑαυτοῦ λόγων ἐκεῖνος πρὸς Ἐφεσίους γράφων, ὅτε τὴν μεγάλην οἰκονομίαν τῆς διὰ σαρκὸς γεγενημένης θεοφανείας ἡμῖν διηγήσατο, ὅτι οὐ μόνον ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις ἐπαιδεύθη τὰ θεῖα διὰ τῆς χάριτος ταύτης μυστήρια, ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῖς

The text describes the divine economy of salvation as the wisdom of God that acts in Christ through the very close union of the divine nature of the Word and the human nature assumed in the Incarnation. Both natures, which are and remain radically distinct, are closely united in Christ. Precisely in the union of the divine and human in Christ is accomplished the economy of salvation, because God acts *in* and *through* the humanity of Christ, i.e. the “mortal substance” of his flesh,¹³⁸ the “material nature” of his human body.¹³⁹ It is a mysterious union that is revealed by God, not only to men, but also to the principalities and powers of heaven. We could say, reading this text together with the previous one, that in Christ, man has not given a name to God; rather, God, in taking a human nature upon himself, revealed to man and to the angels his “manifold wisdom”, teaching us a human name by which we can name Him who remains ineffable.

This Christology is certainly an apophatic Christology. The wisdom of God is revealed in the paradox of the contraries: the authentic presence of God in the humbleness of our nature; the gift of salvation delivered to men by flesh like our own. God, who was known in creation through his power and wisdom, is revealed through the Church by his saving action carried out *in* and *through* Christ. In the humanity of Christ, it is God who acts and is revealed: “life comes through death [...] glory through dishonour”. Through the “marvel” of these “contraries”, salvation comes to us: he who is life gave himself to death to save men.

ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐγνωρίσθη ἡ πολupoικίλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οἰκονομίας φανερωθεῖσα. [...] τῷ ὄντι γὰρ διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας γνωρίζεται ταῖς ὑπερκόσμοις δυνάμεσιν ἡ ποικίλη τοῦ θεοῦ σοφία ἢ διὰ τῶν ἐναντίων θαυματουργήσασα τὰ μεγάλα θαυμάσια, πῶς γέγονε διὰ θανάτου ζωῇ καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ διὰ κατάρας εὐλογία καὶ δόξα διὰ τῆς ἀτιμίας καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας ἡ δύναμις· μόνην γὰρ ἐν τοῖς πρὸ τούτου χρόνοις τὴν ἀπλὴν τε καὶ μονοειδῆ τοῦ θεοῦ σοφίαν αἱ ὑπερκόσμοι δυνάμεις ἐγίνωσκον καταλλήλως ἐνεργούσαν τῇ φύσει τὰ θαύματα [...] τὸ δὲ ποικίλον τοῦτο τῆς σοφίας εἶδος τὸ ἐκ τῆς πρὸς τὰ ἐναντία διαπλοκῆς συνιστάμενον νῦν διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας σαφῶς ἐδιδάχθησαν, πῶς ὁ λόγος σὰρξ γίνεται, πῶς ἡ ζωὴ θανάτῳ μίγνυται, πῶς τῷ ἰδίῳ μῶλωπι τὴν ἡμετέραν ἐξίσταται πληγὴν, πῶς τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ τοῦ σταυροῦ καταπαλαίει τοῦ ἀντικειμένου τὴν δύναμιν, πῶς τὸ ἀόρατον ἐν σαρκὶ φανεροῦται, πῶς ἐξωνεῖται τοὺς αἰχμαλώτους αὐτός τε ὢν ὁ ὠνούμενος καὶ αὐτὸς χρῆμα γινόμενος (ἐαυτὸν γὰρ ἔδωκε λύτρον ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τῷ θανάτῳ), πῶς καὶ ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ γίνεται καὶ τῆς ζωῆς οὐκ ἐξίσταται, πῶς καὶ τῇ δουλείᾳ καταμίγνυται καὶ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ μένει.

¹³⁸ Cant XIII (GNO VI 381,21).

¹³⁹ Cant VI (GNO IV 176,14). This realistic expressions of Gregory concerning the concrete human nature of Christ do not allow to consider it on a different way than a real human nature which entails an authentic corporeality. The human nature assumed by the Word is not a mere universal idea of humanity neither a theoretical concept, he is a perfect in his humanity and so true man.

This has some very important consequences in the area of Gregory's spiritual doctrine. Gregory, who proposes as a Christian ideal the Pauline apophthegm *I live, yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me*,¹⁴⁰ defines ascetic life as making the meanings of the name of Christ real in one's own life.¹⁴¹ The "name" of Christ, as Gregory states in *De perfectione*, contains in itself all of the perfection of the Christian life,¹⁴² and, what is also important, the "name" of Christ is the conjunction of the "manifold wisdom of God" that we learn through the Church. What Gregory labels as a "union of the contraries" is certainly not a dialectic synthesis of opposites, something impossible between the human and divine natures; but rather, the "admirable union" through which the Son of God is made man and accomplishes salvation from "within" the human nature.¹⁴³ That is, what to human eyes is impossible because they appear to be absurd opposites has become, through divine economy, the path to salvation.

According to Gregory, the Christian vocation is to worthily bear the name of Christ; and this means the imitation of Christ and living the life of Christ. Moreover, since the "divine wisdom of the contraries" is inherent in the life of Christ, it could be said that the Christian life also means to take part in this divine logic of the "contraries". It is also from this logic that one can understand the ascent of the soul toward God. The Word carries man upon himself and elevates him by means of the mysteries of his own life in an endless ascent, and because the distance between God and the soul is always infinite, it is in the union of the contraries—in the "sober drunkenness", "vigilant sleep", "impassible passion" or "luminous shadow"—where the power and wisdom of God accomplishes "great wonders" in man.

In this sense, the Christology of Gregory, upon which his entire spiritual and mystical doctrine is based,¹⁴⁴ is what one might call an "oxymoronic Christology". In rhetoric, an oxymoron is the union of two opposing terms to express

140 Gal 2.20.

141 Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, "Imágenes de la Imagen. Génesis 1,26 y Colosenses 1,15 en Gregorio de Nisa", *Scripta Theologica* 40 (2008) 684.

142 Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, "Imitación y seguimiento de Cristo en Gregorio de Nisa", 602–606; Cf. M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nysse. Écrits spirituelles*, Paris 1990, 8.

143 For H. Dörries, this manifold wisdom of God working through the contraries—which he inappropriately calls "dialektische Weisheit"—points out Gregory's Christian thought in respect to Greek philosophy, cf. H. Dörries, "Griechentum und Christentum bei Gregor von Nyssa. Zu H. Langerbecks Edition des Hohelied-Kommentars in der Leidener Gregor Ausgabe", *ThLZ* 88 (1963) 582.

144 Cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, "La cristología del *In Canticum Cantorum*", 189.

a more profound and intense reality that goes beyond the words, and in a certain sense is ineffable.¹⁴⁵ In Christ, the ineffable union of the two natures means that the Word, remaining true and perfect God, acts *in* and *through* his humanity, and gives way to not only a new meaning but an authentic new life, that of those who through baptism bear his very name.

6 Conclusion

At the beginning of the *In Canticum*, Gregory of Nyssa describes Christ as a new Solomon. He does this with words that perhaps can serve as a final recapitulation of what we have said here. Christ is the new Solomon because he

was born of the seed of David according to the flesh (Rm 1.3) and his name is Peace; he is the true King of Israel and the builder of God's temple; he grasps the knowledge of all things; his wisdom is without limit, or rather, he is the One whose being (τὸ εἶναι) is Wisdom and Truth; and to him belongs every name and idea that is exalted and worthy of God.¹⁴⁶

The Christological texts of *In Canticum* that we have analysed highlight the fundamental traits of Gregory's Christology, which we could summarise in three affirmations: the equality of Christ with the Father in divinity, his consubstantiality with man through the Incarnation, and the extraordinary close unity of the divine and the human in Christ. For this reason, Christ can be a true mediator, and Christian life can be understood as the imitation of Christ and the union with God in Christ.

Accordingly, Gregory's Christology could be described as an "oxymoronic Christology". In Christ, two abysses are truly united, and consequently, in speaking about this mystery, what is reasonable is that which appears paradoxical to human perception. For Gregory, the close unity of the divine and the human in Christ is not absurd, but instead is a mystery of divine love toward man, which founds a new apophatic language—the *communicatio idiomatum*—and that

¹⁴⁵ C. Curzel describes Gregory's oxymoron as follows: "la *coincidentia oppositorum* diventa paradossalmente un modo per meglio significare una realtà ineffabile, proprio perché fa esplodere il concetto con l'accostamento al suo contrario [...] proprio rompendo le leggi della logicità, aprire un cammino verso di essa, può fungere in qualche modo da 'trascinatore del pensiero'", C. Curzel, "Gli ossimori nelle *Omellie sul Cantico dei cantici* e nella *Vita di Mosè* di Gregorio di Nissa", *Augustinianum* 51 (2011) 47.

¹⁴⁶ *Cant* 1 (GNO VI 17,2–7).

makes it possible for man to be inserted into this mystery by the Word and raised towards God in an ever greater *epektasis*.

The blending of theological speculation and spiritual doctrine that is present in the Christological texts of these *Homilies* suggests the need to re-read the Christology of Gregory's dogmatic writings from the great *akolouthia* of his thinking. Therefore we can probably state that in Gregory, the Christology is founded on the spiritual doctrine and *vice versa*.

Bibliography

- Armstrong, A.H. *Plotinus, VII: Enneads VI.6–9*, Cambridge 1988.
- Aubineau, M. *Grégoire de Nysse. Traité de la Virginité*, SC 119, Paris 1966.
- Auer, J. *Jesucristo hijo de Dios e hijo de María*, Barcelona 1989.
- Baehrens, W.A. *Origen. Homilien zu Samuel I, zum Hohelied und zu den Propheten*, Leipzig 1925.
- Balás, D.L. *Μετουσία Θεου. Man's participation in God's perfections according to saint Gregory of Nyssa*, Rome 1966;
- Balás, D.L. "Eternity and Time", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 289–292.
- Behr, J. *Formation of Christian Theology. Volume 2: The Nicene Faith. Part Two: One of the Holy Trinity*, Crestwood 2004.
- Bouchet, J.-R. "A propos d'une image christologique de Grégoire de Nysse", *RThom* 67 (1967) 584–588;
- Bouchet, J.-R. "Le vocabulaire de l'union et du rapport des natures chez Grégoire de Nysse", *RThom* 68 (1968) 533–582.
- Brugarolas, M. *El Espíritu Santo: de la divinidad a la procesión*, Pamplona 2012;
- Brugarolas, M. "Beauty and the presence of God in the soul: Gregory of Nyssa's commentary on Ct 5,2", in: J.E. Rutherford (ed.), *The Beauty of God's Presence in the Fathers of the Church. The Proceedings of the Eighth International Patristic Conference, Maynooth, 2012*, Dublin 2014, 128–149;
- Brugarolas, M. "The Holy Spirit as the 'glory' of Christ. Gregory of Nyssa on John 17.22", in: N. Dumitrescu (ed.), *The Ecumenical Legacy of the Cappadocians*, London 2015, 252–256;
- Brugarolas, M. "Theological Remarks on Gregory of Nyssa's Christological Language of 'Mixture'", *Studia Patristica* 84 (2017), 39–58;
- Brugarolas, M. "La mediación de Cristo en Gregorio de Nisa", *Scripta Theologica* 49 (2017) 301–326.
- Canévet, M. "Exégèse et théologie dans les traités spirituels de Grégoire de Nysse", in: M. Harl, *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du Colloque de Chevetogne (22–26 Septembre 1969)*, Leiden 1971, 144–168;

- Canévet, M. *Grégoire de Nysse et l'herméneutique biblique. Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu*, Paris 1983;
- Canévet, M. "Saint Grégoire de Nysse", *DSp* 6, coll. 971–1011;
- Canévet, M. *Grégoire de Nysse. Écrits spirituelles*, Paris 1990.
- Coakley, S. "Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa: Introduction—Gender, Trinitarian analogies, and the pedagogy of *The Song*", *MoTh* 18 (2002) 431–443;
- Coakley, S. "'Mingling' in Gregory of Nyssa's Christology: A Reconsideration", in: A. Schuele—G. Thomas, *Who is Jesus Christ for us today? Pathways to contemporary christology*, Louisville 2009, 72–84.
- Cortesi, A. *Le omelie sul cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nissa. Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale*, Roma 2000.
- Crouzel, H.—M. Simonetti, *Origène. Traité des Principes. 11: Commentaire et fragments*, SC 253, Paris 1978.
- Curzel, C. "Gli ossimori nelle Omelie sul Cantico dei cantici e nella Vita di Mosè di Gregorio di Nissa", *Augustinianum* 51 (2011) 47–84.
- Daley, B.E. "Divine Transcendence and Human Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa's Anti-Apollinarian Christology", *StPatr* 32 (1997) 87–95.
- Daniélou, J. *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, Paris 1944;
- Daniélou, J. *Bible et liturgie. La théologie biblique des Sacrements et des fêtes d'après les Pères de l'Église*, Paris 1962;
- Daniélou, J. *L'être et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Leiden 1970
- Daniélou, J.—H. Musurillo, *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, Crestwood (NY) 1979.
- Dörries, H. "Griechentum und Christentum bei Gregor von Nyssa. Zu H. Langerbecks Edition des Hohelied-Kommentars in der Leidener Gregor Ausgabe", *ThLZ* 88 (1963) 569–582.
- Dünzl, F. *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993;
- Dünzl, F. *Gregor von Nyssa. Homelien zum Hohenlied*, 1, Freiburg 1994.
- Gordillo, M. "La virginidad trascendente de María Madre de Dios en san Gregorio de Nisa", *Estudios Marianos* 21 (1960) 117–155.
- Grillmeier, A. *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche. Band 1: Von der Apostolischen Zeit bis zum Konzil von Chalcedon (451)*, Freiburg 1979.
- Harl, M. "Références philosophiques et références bibliques du langage de Grégoire de Nysse dans ses *Orationes in Canticum Canticorum*", in: H. Eisenberger (Hrsg.), *ΕΡΜΗΝΕΥΜΑΤΑ. Festschrift für Hadwig Hörner zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, Heidelberg 1990, 117–131.
- Kelly, J.N.D. *Early Christian Doctrines*, New York 1978.
- Laird, M. *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith. Union, knowledge and divine presence*, Oxford 2004.

- Ludlow, M. *Gregory of Nyssa, Ancient and (Post)modern*, Oxford 2007.
- Maraval, P. "La lettre 3 de Grégoire de Nysse dans le débat christologique", *RSR* 61 (1987) 74–89.
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. "Kenosis, Exaltación de Cristo y Apocatástasis en la exégesis a Filipenses 2,5–11 de S. Gregorio de Nisa", *Scripta Theologica* 3 (1971) 301–342;
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. *Estudios sobre la Cristología de Gregorio de Nisa*, Pamplona 1978;
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. "La mariología en San Gregorio de Nisa", *Scripta Theologica* 10 (1978) 409–466;
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. "La cristología del *In Canticum Canticorum*", in: H.R. Drobner—Ch. Klock (eds.), *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der Christlichen Spätantike*, Leiden 1990, 173–190;
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. "Imitación y seguimiento de Cristo en Gregorio de Nisa", *Scripta Theologica* 33 (2001) 601–622;
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. "Notas sobre el lenguaje cristológico de Gregorio de Nisa", *Scripta Theologica* 35 (2003) 89–112;
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. "Imágenes de la Imagen. Génesis 1,26 y Colosenses 1,15 en Gregorio de Nisa", *Scripta Theologica* 40 (2008) 677–694;
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. "Christology", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 139–152.
- Maspero, G. *Trinity and Man. Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabium*, Leiden 2007;
- Maspero, G. "Life", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 438–446.
- McCambley, C. "Saint Gregory of Nyssa. *On Perfection*", *GOTR* 29 (1984) 349–379;
- McCambley, C. *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Brookline 1987.
- Meredith, A. *Gregory of Nyssa*, London 2003.
- Michel, A. "Communication des idiomes", *DThC* VII, 595–602.
- Moreschini, C. *Gregorio di Nissa. Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici*, Roma 1996.
- Mosshammer, A.A. "Disclosing but not Disclosed. Gregory of Nyssa as Deconstructionist", in: H.R. Drobner—Ch. Klock (eds.), *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der christlichen Spätantike*, Leiden 1990, 99–123.
- Moutsoulas, E.D. *Γρηγόριος Νύσσης. Βίος, Συγγράμματα, Διδασκαλία*, Athens 1997;
- Moutsoulas, E.D. *The Incarnation of the Word and the theosis of Man according to the teaching of Gregory of Nyssa*, Athens 2000;
- Moutsoulas, E. "The person of Jesus Christ in St. Gregory of Nyssa", in: Id., *Jesus Christ in St. Gregory of Nyssa's Theology: minutes of the Ninth International Conference on St. Gregory of Nyssa (Athens, 7–12 September 2000)*, Athens 2005, 102–113.
- Mühlenberg, E. *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa. Gregors Kritik am Gottesbegriff der klassischen Metaphysik*, Göttingen 1966.
- Norris, R.A. *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012.

- Ocáriz, F.—L.F. Mateo-Seco—J.A. Riestra, *El Misterio de Jesucristo*, Pamplona 2010.
- Ojell, A. *One Word, One Body, One Voice. Studies in Apophatic Theology and Christocentric Anthropology in Gregory of Nyssa*, Helsinki 2007.
- Pannenberg, W. *Jesus- God and Man*, Philadelphia 1977.
- Sferlea, O. “L’infinité divine chez Grégoire de Nysse: de l’anthropologie à la polémique trinitaire”, *VigChr* 67 (2013) 137–168.
- Silvas, A. *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters. Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, Leiden 2007.
- Simonetti, M. *Lettera e/o Allegoria. Un contributo alla storia dell’esegesi patristica*, Roma 1985.
- Stead, G.Ch. “Ontology and Terminology in Gregory of Nyssa”, in: H. Dörrie (ed.), *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie*, Leiden 1976, 107–127.
- Strzelczyk, G. *Communicatio Idiomatum: Lo scambio delle proprietà. Storia, status quaestionis e prospettive*, Roma 2004.
- Tixeront, J. *Histoire des dogmes dans l’antiquité chrétienne. II: De Saint Athanase a Saint Augustin (318–430)*, Paris 1931.
- Vandenbussche, E. “La part de la dialectique dans la théologie d’Eunomius ‘le Technologue’”, *RHE* 40 (1944/45) 47–72.
- Zachhuber, J. “Phyrama”, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 612–614.
- Zachhuber, J. “Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium III 4”, in: J. Leemans—M. Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa Contra Eunomium III. An English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Leuven, 14–17 September 2010)*, Leiden 2014, 313–334.

From First Fruits to the Whole Lump: the Redemption of Human Nature in Gregory's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*

Johannes Zachhuber

1 Introduction

For at least 150 years, Gregory's soteriology has remained more controversial than other parts of his theology. The charge was originally led by Wilhelm Herrmann in his Latin dissertation *Gregorii Nysseni sententiae de salute adipiscenda*.¹ Herrmann, who went on to become one of the most influential Lutheran theologians of his time, the teacher of both Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, accused Gregory of lacking a sound conception of the appropriation of Christ's salvific deed by humankind. Herrmann focused on a number of passages, especially in Gregory's *Adversus Eunomum*, the *Antirrheticus*, and the *Catechetical Oration* to argue that Gregory's understanding of salvation was "physical" and not "ethical".² Once human nature had been divinised in the person of the saviour, this effect was passed on by virtue of the "natural" cohesion of universal humanity without any regard for individual faith or individual agency.³

Herrmann was not oblivious of the fact that the Nyssen did emphasise human effort on the road towards spiritual and ethical perfection. Yet he argued that in those passages Gregory not so much mitigated his physical doctrine, but overcompensated for it.⁴ In other words, while he may have alternated between one view in which individual persons receive redemption purely by virtue of their participation in the human race, and one according to which their own works were key and the role of Christ seemingly reduced to that of an exemplar, both were ultimately an expression of his failure to conceptualise the divine and the human role in the process of redemption. The physical doctrine of salvation and a semi-pelagian view of human perfection would thus only be two sides of the same coin.

1 W. Herrmann, *Gregorii Nysseni sententiae de salute adipiscenda*, Halle/s 1875.

2 *Ibidem*, 10–12.

3 *Ibidem*, 16–37.

4 *Ibidem*, 37–49.

Herrmann's Latin dissertation of merely 49 pages was probably never read by too many people. His views became influential initially because Albrecht Ritschl, in his historical treatment of the doctrines of justification and reconciliation, drew heavily on Herrmann's thesis for his brief treatment of the church fathers.⁵ Even more important, arguably, was Adolf Harnack's decision to adopt Herrmann's view in his magisterial *History of Dogma*. The relevant paragraph in Harnack's admirably clear prose reads as follows:

Gregory was able to demonstrate the application of the Incarnation more definitely than Athanasius could [...]. But he does so by the aid of a thoroughly Platonic idea which is only slightly suggested in Athanasius, and is not really covered by a biblical reference. Christ did not assume the human nature of an individual person, but human nature. Accordingly, all that was human was intertwined with the Deity; the whole of human nature became divine by intermixture with the divine.⁶

It is immediately evident that Harnack modified Herrmann's thesis. The main thrust of his criticism is no longer Gregory's alleged inability to reconcile God's salvific act with human agency. Rather, it is Gregory's fateful reliance on a Platonic theory of universal humanity that is to blame for his inadequate concept of salvation. This assessment, of course, is fully in line with Harnack's more general view that Hellenisation was a deeply ambivalent process in Christian history, but it is significant to note how Harnack's intervention in the debate changed the very question that was asked. Henceforth, the main point of disagreement between Gregory's detractors and his defenders concerned his use of the concept of universal human nature in his soteriology and its philosophical background.⁷

There is little doubt that a grasp of Gregory's specific concept of universal human nature is indeed necessary for a full understanding of his soteriology; yet it is arguable that in the ensuing scholarly debate about this problem, Herrmann's original issue slipped too far from the attention of patristic theologians.⁸ The present paper, therefore, is partly intended as a reminder that

5 A. Ritschl, *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, Vol. 1, Bonn 1888, 12–14.

6 A. Harnack, *History of Dogma* (tr. N. Buchanan), Vol. 3, London 1894–1899, 297.

7 Cf. mainly R.M. Hübnér, *Die Einheit des Leibes Christi bei Gregor von Nyssa: Untersuchungen zum Ursprung der "physischen" Erlösungslehre*, Leiden 1974; J. Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa: Philosophical Background and Theological Significance*, Leiden 1999.

8 Cf. however, the controversy between Adolf Martin Ritter and Ekkehard Mühlenberg in the 70s: A.M. Ritter, "Die Gnadenlehre Gregors von Nyssa nach seiner Schrift 'Über das Leben des

important questions about Gregory's doctrine of salvation remain unanswered, specifically concerning his notion of the divine and human roles in the appropriation of Christ's redemptive act.

As will, I hope, become apparent, Gregory's *Commentary on the Song of Songs* offers particularly interesting material for such an examination if perhaps not for an unequivocal adjudication of the matter. I have decided to focus in particular on Gregory's use of the biblical metaphor of the "first fruits" (ἀπαρχή) and the "dough" (φύραμα) which he employed to illustrate the progression of humanity's redemption throughout his works. Herrmann already singled out his use of this "physical" metaphor "qua [Gregory] innumeris locis salutem ad universam hominum translatam describit".⁹

In what follows I shall start from some observations on Gregory's place in the history of Patristic uses of this metaphor to go on with a consideration of three passages from the last two of Gregory's homilies in which he makes use of the first fruits and the dough to illustrate his understanding of the redemptive process. As we shall see, the underlying soteriological principles are by no means identical, but this in itself will help us get a better sense for Gregory's approach to the doctrine of salvation.

2 First Fruits and Dough in Earlier Patristic Thought

Herrmann's interest in Gregory's use of the metaphor of "first fruits" and the "dough" has already been noted. Yet neither he nor Isaak August Dorner, whose ethical interpretation of Gregory's teaching Herrmann rejected,¹⁰ showed any concern for its biblical and Patristic roots even though it is arguable that this background can help elucidate some of the theological problems Gregory had inherited.

a Romans 11.6 and Its Background

In Rm 11.16a Paul wrote that "if the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump". It is one of a series of metaphors he uses to illustrate the lasting

Mose", in: H. Dörrie—M. Altenburger—U. Schramm (eds.), *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie*, Leiden 1976, 195–239; E. Mühlenberg, "Synergism in Gregory of Nyssa", *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 68 (1977) 93–122. While Ritter and Mühlenberg addressed Gregory's soteriology, however, their main point of interest was the relationship between his doctrine of grace and human free will.

⁹ W. Herrmann, *Gregorii Nysseni sententiae de salute adipiscenda*, 34.

¹⁰ I.A. Dorner, *Entwicklungsgeschichte der Lehre von der Person Jesu Christi von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die neueste dargestellt*, Vol. 1, Stuttgart 1845–1853, 958–960.

importance of the election of the people of Israel, but it is unique in this context in at least two ways.

Firstly, it is itself based on allusion to a biblical text. In Num 15.17–21 a sacrifice is described whose precise meaning is not entirely clear,¹¹ but which for readers of the Septuagint suggested that a first part of the dough (ἀπαρχή φυράματος) prepared from the annual grain harvest should always be set aside. A loaf made of this “first fruits” of the dough was to be offered up to יהוה.

In practice this meant that this loaf was for the benefit of the priests at the temple. Philo therefore interpreted this law as guaranteeing that the sanctity of the priests would spread to the people of Israel as a whole:

God commands those who are making bread, to take of all the fat and of all the dough, a loaf as first fruits for the use of the priests, making thus, by this legitimate instruction, a provision for those men who put aside these first fruits, proceeding in the way that leads to piety; for being accustomed at all times to offer first fruits of the necessary food, they will thus have an everlasting recollection of God, than which it is impossible to imagine a greater blessing.¹²

Philo's understanding of sacrifice as leading to the sanctification of those who bring the offering, might help understand something decidedly odd in Paul's use of this imagery. For within the Old Testament context that which is made holy by means of sacrifice is thereby radically separated from the profane remainder.¹³ Paul's intention, however, is different: the participation of some Jews in the Christian community implies that ultimately “all Israel will be saved” (11.26) once their πλῆρωμα (11.11) has become part of the new order of salvation. Like Philo, Paul seems to think that holiness in a part spreads to holiness in the whole, but unlike the Alexandrian philosopher he thinks that this possibility exists even apart from their apparent activity, at least at the present moment. He does, of course, emphasise the need for those Israelites not to “persist in unbelief” (v. 23), but has to reckon with the fact that for now they actively

11 Mainly because the meaning of the Hebrew term “arisōt” is uncertain: cf. T.R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, Grand Rapids, MI 1993, 282–283.

12 Philo, *De specialibus legibus* 1 132–133; Cf. on Philo's understanding of the ἀπαρχή J. Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria*, Tübingen 2001, 192–201.

13 L. Keck, *Romans*, Nashville (TN) 2005, 273; cf. B.D. Gordon, “On the Sanctity of Mixtures and Branches: Two Halakic Sayings in Rm 11.16–24”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 135 (2016) 355–368 for a fundamentally different interpretation of the background of Paul's metaphor.

resist the new faith. This idiosyncratically sacrificial background of the verse is its first remarkable element: the sanctification of a part sanctifies the whole, at least potentially.

Verse 16a stands out from the remainder of the Rm 11 in another way too. Within the context of the chapter it is evident that an important aspect of Paul's hope for the future of Israel's salvation is its original election (v. 29) and the piety of the earlier Israelites (v. 28, probably also 16b). His statement about first fruits and dough, however, appears to make, or at least imply, a claim about the relationship between the faith of Jewish Christians and the salvation of the whole people of Israel. This is so counterintuitive that readers of the epistle have sometimes been tempted to assume that the "first fruits" is Abraham or generally the patriarchs.¹⁴ This, however, is almost certainly wrong: Paul clearly is talking here about the "remnant chosen by grace" (v. 5, cf. v. 14), the "elect who obtained" salvation. This raises the question of how their salvation can have any impact on the future salvation of their compatriots? Paul's overriding logic seems to be theocentric and predestinarian: their existence proves that God's election of Israel has not come to an end but that God, on the basis of his power (v. 23), will finally graft in again the branches that were broken off the olive tree (vs 19; 23). Yet it is undeniable that Paul's metaphor in verse 16a invites speculation about another possibility as well, namely that the holiness of the first fruits *spreads* through the whole dough until its "fullness" (v. 11) has been made holy.

These observations may help explain the particular way Rm 11.16 has been received in the Early Church. The verse seems to have enjoyed a special popularity above and beyond the remainder of the section from which it is taken. It is often cited by itself; in some ways it seems to have commanded attention apart from its context within Paul's larger text. Furthermore, its use from the very beginning was soteriological; the fathers assumed it was containing information about the precise way salvation as worked in Christ spreads to the plurality of believers. This does not mean that they agreed on what this information was. Nor does it mean that the context within Rm 11 should be ignored for understanding their respective take on Paul's simile.

b *The Valentinian Exegesis of Rm 11.16*

Interest in Rm 11.16 as a soteriological proof text seems to have originated with the Valentinians. From two sources we know that they made use of the verse in

¹⁴ In the early Church Diodore of Tarsus and Ambrosiaster: G. Bray (ed.), *Romans*, Illinois 1998, 282. For modern exegetes cf. L. Keck, *Romans*, Nashville (TN) 2005.

their doctrine of three races of man, pneumatic, psychic, and somatic. Irenaeus reports their teaching in the following words:

The Saviour received first-fruits of those whom he was to save, Paul declared when he said, "And if the first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy", teaching that the expression "first-fruits" denoted that which is spiritual, but that "the lump" meant us, that is, the psychic Church, the lump of which they say he assumed, and blended it with himself, inasmuch as he is "the leaven".¹⁵

The indignation of the Bishop of Lyons at the suggestion that "the psychic Church" might be merely second in the order of salvation, is palpable in this passage. Yet the Valentinian exegesis should not for this reason be dismissed off hand but deserves to be taken seriously. They clearly perceived the relevance of Paul's pronouncement about the holiness of the remnant and the future salvation of many.¹⁶ To the former, they applied Paul's predestinarian teaching in Rm 11, while for the latter they emphasised the importance of free will as we can see from a passage in the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*: "for what is spiritual is saved by nature; what is psychic has free will having the potential to choose faith and incorruptibility as well as unbelief and corruptibility; what is somatic will perish by nature".¹⁷

According to Irenaeus, the Valentinians made one additional assumption in their exegesis of Rm 11.16: they identified the Saviour (σωτήρ) as the leaven (ζύμη). Irenaeus suggests that the basis for this identification was their exegesis of the Parable of the Leaven¹⁸ in which they took the leaven to refer to the Saviour.¹⁹ It is however conceivable that they were also thinking of 1 Cor 5.6 ("a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough"). In any case, the result is an interpretation of Rm 11.16 according to which Christ as the leaven raises together with himself first the pneumatics as the first fruits, then the Church as the "batch of dough".

15 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1 8 3 (tr. ANS 1, 327 [with changes]).

16 Since Klaus Koschorke's doctoral dissertation, Valentinian ecclesiology has been re-evaluated. It is now usually recognised that their teaching of the three classes was underwriting a much more inclusive and dynamic soteriology than had been previously thought. K. Koschorke, *Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum*, Leiden 1978; B. Aland, "Erwählungstheologie und Menschenklassenlehre", in: M. Krause (ed.), *Gnosis and Gnosticism*, Leiden 1981, 148–181.

17 Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 56,3.

18 Mt 13,33.

19 Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1 8,3.

Once again, the outlines of Irenaeus' report are confirmed by the *Excerpta*:

Jesus Christ assumed in himself by an act of power (δυνάμει) the Church, those who are elected and those who are called (cf. Mt 22.14); the former, spiritual, from the mother, the latter, psychic, from the dispensation. And he saved and lifted up what he assumed and through them what was consubstantial: "If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; and if the root is holy, then the branches also are holy".²⁰

Paul's comment about the relationship between Israel's "remnant" and the entire people has here been transformed into a theory about the progress of salvation from a primary group of the "elect", the pneumatics, (but cf. Rm 11.7!) to the bulk of ordinary believers, the psychics who comes to faith by choosing it over against unbelief. Contrary to what has often been written, the intention of this argument seems not so much to denigrate the psychics' potential for salvation but to explain its possibility. The Church contains both, pneumatics and psychics, and so the assumption of one part ultimately leads to the salvation of all.

A new element is the introduction of a reference to Christ into the internal logic of the Pauline verse. This may be explained, as Irenaeus suggests, by a combined exegesis of two or more passages, but one might wonder whether not the sacrificial language in Rm 11.16 itself contributed to this addition. The first fruits, after all, is itself holy only by its participation in the holiness of the divine so a speculative reader might find such a reference implied in Paul's own words.

c *Anti-Gnostic Interpretations: Irenaeus and Origen*

Irenaeus did not, as far as we know, respond to this interpretation with his own exegesis of Rm 11.16. Instead, he sought to rebut the Valentinian reading of this verse by insisting that it was at odds with Paul's overall teaching. As Jeffrey Bingham has suggested, Irenaeus drew in particular on Rm 8 to argue that, the seemingly predestinarian or even deterministic passages in chapters 9–11 notwithstanding, Paul ascribes human sinfulness only or at least essentially to human agency. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"²¹ is not said on the basis of a physical disposition, but refers to the wrong moral

²⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 58,1–2.

²¹ 1 Cor 15.50.

choices.²² Similarly, if “persons who are not bringing forth fruits of righteousness [...] use diligence and receive the word of God as a graft [cf. Rm 11.23], [they] arrive at the pristine nature of man [*pristinam hominis naturam*]-that which was created after the image and likeness of God”.²³

It was, however, up to Origen to develop a detailed anti-Gnostic exegesis of Rm 11.16 in his extensive *Commentary on Romans*. Like Irenaeus, Origen emphasised that there is only one nature of all men—or indeed of all spiritual beings (*unam esse naturam omnium hominum, immo omnium rationabilium*)²⁴—whose property is their free will which remains decisive even in the face of outside influences (*aliquid [...] extrinsecus vel ad mala provocet vel hortetur ad bona*).²⁵ The distinction between first fruits and the batch of dough cannot therefore be one between different classes of people. Instead, Origen identified the ἀπαρχή with Christ. To support this interpretation, he adduced Col 1.15 where the apostle called Jesus “the firstborn of all creation” (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως). The combined reading of these two verses permitted Origen an interpretation of Paul’s reference to first fruits and the lump of dough as an illustration of the transmission of Christ’s salvific agency to humanity in general. The salvation worked by Christ, the “first fruits”, extends to the entirety of the human race (*ex hac delibatione sancta omnis massa humani generis sanctificatur*).²⁶

The mechanism of this transmission, according to Origen, is the gift of the Holy Spirit: the holy root²⁷ passes on the fullness of sanctity to the branches connected to it and gives them new life through the Holy Spirit.²⁸ In practice, this means that those “branches” benefit from the divine word, which by means of its wisdom, leads to the flourishing of virtues.²⁹ Origen thus does not move away at all from his emphasis on free will as the foundation of the salvation of rational creatures; on the contrary, the relationship suggested by the metaphor of first fruits and dough is thoroughly spiritual and ethical even though it is also worked by God.

It is difficult not to feel that Origen is reading Rm 11 against the Pauline text. So keen is he to avoid any concession to the perceived threat of Gnos-

22 Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* V 10, 1.

23 *Ibidem*. Cf. J. Bingham, “Irenaeus Reads *Romans* 8: Resurrection and Renovation”, in: K.L. Gaca—L.L. Welborn (eds.), *Early Patristic Readings*, New York—London 2005, 114–133, here: 123–126.

24 Origen, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Romanos* VIII 11 (PG 14, 1191 C).

25 *Ibidem* (PG 14, 1192 A).

26 *Ibidem* (PG 14, 1193 B).

27 Rm 11.16b.

28 *Ibidem* (PG 14, 1193 C).

29 *Ibidem*.

tic teaching that he all but drowns out Paul's predestinarian message.³⁰ Still, his interpretation of first fruits and dough is intriguing. While at first sight, the identification of Christ as the "first fruits" may seem counterintuitive in the present text, Origen clarifies that Christ for him is also "the true Israel".³¹ In this way, the salvific work by means of which the "first fruits" sanctifies through the divine word and its wisdom has "always" (*semper*) operated in the same manner, first in the old Israel and now in the Church.³²

That the introduction of Christ into the interpretation of Paul's simile owed something to its sacrificial overtones was merely an intriguing speculation in the case of the Valentinians. For Origen it emerges as a distinct possibility as his interpretation of Rm 11.16 ties in neatly with his exegesis of the first fruits in his *Homilies on the Book of Numbers*.³³ There too he identifies Christ as the ultimate first fruits, the "first fruits of first fruits" (*primitiarum primitiae*),³⁴ justifies this in the first instance with 1 Cor 15.20 (Christ as "first fruits of those who sleep"), and indicates that 1 Col 15 is also pertinent.³⁵ Not surprisingly perhaps, given the biblical context of the Book of *Numbers*, he adds a sacrificial dimension to his interpretation:

These first fruits are offered no longer to the high priest, but to God, in accordance with the fact that "he offered himself as a sacrifice to God" (cf. Eph 5.2) and by rising from the dead "he sat down at the right hand of God" (Col 3.1).³⁶

The sanctification of the first fruits, accordingly, is now the result of the final sacrifice in which Christ offered himself up to God. Those who participate in this act, participate in his own holiness as well. Characteristically, this participation is understood by Origen in the first instance as participation in the resurrection (on the basis of 1 Cor 15.20). Christ's eternal life is passed on to the faithful and overcomes for them their own mortality.

While direct evidence for the combination of this text with Origen's exegesis of Rm 11.16 is absent, it may nevertheless not be too far-fetched to summarise

30 Cf. his lengthy attempts to "explain away" the "hardening of hearts" in *De Principiis* III 1, 7–17.

31 Origen, *Commentarius in Epistulam ad Romanos* VIII (PG 14, 1193 C).

32 *Ibidem*.

33 Origen, *Homilia in Numeros* 11, 4 (PG 12, 647–650).

34 Origen, *Homilia in Numeros* 11,4[7] (PG 12, 650 A–B).

35 *Ibidem*.

36 *Ibidem*. (tr. T.P. Scheck, *Origen, Homilies on Numbers*, Illinois 2009, 57).

Origen's anti-Gnostic understanding of the verse on the basis of both passages as follows:

1. Christ is the first fruits offering himself to God, and as a result of this sacrifice the community of those who are united to him is transformed into likeness with God as well. In the past, this has been achieved through his identification with the historic Israel and its priestly, sacrificial cult, but in the new dispensation, he is the head of the Church which through him is immediately connected with God and as the "dough" made holy alongside with him.
2. This transformation of the dough is described in almost purely ethical terms; in fact, it appears that the distinction between those human beings who are connected to Christ and those who are not is entirely based on their moral choices. Origen, it may thus seem, reduces divine agency in the process of salvation to spiritual exhortation. Against the Valentinians, however, he emphasises the notion of a universal human nature to argue that on its basis the sanctification of the first fruits (Christ) is passed on to all humanity. The solution to this seeming dilemma is that for Origen divine agency works alongside human volition. Christ is Wisdom³⁷ and thus operates in and through human moral perfection. To the extent that the potential for such perfection is given to all people by means of their free will, Origen's identification of the dough with the whole of human nature does not have to vitiate against his apparent alignment of salvation with moral perfection.
3. A tension does, however, emerge insofar as Origen also considers the universal resurrection and thus the overcoming of mortality as an effect of Christ's sacrifice as the first fruits. In this connection, the notion of the "total mass of the human race" (*tota massa humani generis*) is more suggestive of a physical relationship between Christ as first fruits and humanity as the dough.

3 Gregory's Use of *Rm* 11.16

Moving on to Gregory, it is, first of all, obvious that the metaphor of first fruits and dough appealed to him: he employed it over twenty times in his extant writings.³⁸ This paper, however, will not analyse the full breadth of these pas-

37 Cf. e.g. Origen, *Commentarii in Evangelium Joannis* 119 (111).

38 J. Zachhuber, "Phyrama", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 612–614.

sages, but rather focus on those to be found in Gregory's late *Commentary on the Song of Songs*.³⁹ There are not many instances to consider, but they occur in theologically central and rather dense passages. Eventually, I hope, an analysis of these passages against the background of the earlier history of interpretation will shed light on Gregory's particular use of the Pauline metaphor and, thereby, help improve our understanding of his soteriology.

a *Gregory's Use of First Fruits and Dough in Homily XIII*

I shall start my investigation from a lengthy passage in Gregory's thirteenth homily.⁴⁰ The biblical text he wrestles with is the "colloquy of friends and bride",⁴¹ a passage in which the female lover is asked to explain how and why her beloved is different from and better than other men. For Gregory, the subject speaking here is the human soul and the object of her discourse is Christ himself. This for him raises the question of how what is "unknowable" (ἀγνοούμενον) about God becomes visible in Christ to those who perceive truth with the eyes of the soul.⁴² To this, Gregory replies in the first instance that "the teacher" (ἡ διδάσκαλος) thinks of Christ's humanity, his created part, because in and through the latter the uncreated and invisible nature of the deity can to some extent be grasped.⁴³

This, Gregory continues, is "the great mystery of our religion".⁴⁴ God became revealed in the flesh; he who was in divine form turned towards men in the role of a slave. In the unique historical act of the Incarnation (ἄπαξ) he took on the frail nature of the flesh through its first fruits. Continually (ἀεί) he sanctifies the whole lump of the nature together with the first fruits. By means of those who unite themselves with him, he nurtures his own body, the church, whose members are increasingly integrated into him as limbs of this very body: eyes, mouth, and hands.⁴⁵

It is significant that Gregory in the present place describes the goal of Incarnation and, more broadly, redemption in the terminology of cognition and knowledge. In Christ, the eternal becomes visible and perceptible in the flesh. Nature becomes transparent for the divine; matter allows us to perceive spirit;

39 Cf. on the date: P. Maraval, "Chronology of Works", in: Mateo-Seco—Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 158.

40 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 380,7–386,17).

41 Ct 5,9–16.

42 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 380,10–15).

43 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 381,10–17).

44 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 381,16–382,6).

45 1Cor 12,12.

the created gives a glimpse of the uncreated. This surely is not an *ad hoc* argument, but harks back to some of Gregory's most powerful earlier work. In the *De anima et resurrectione*, he had through the mouth of his sister, Macrina, presented the argument that much as the world displays the wisdom and power of its maker, the human body allows us to infer the existence of an intelligible soul.⁴⁶

This approach is characteristic of Gregory's understanding of *phusis*, nature, as a reality that is perceived by the senses in the first instance, but then reveals deeper strata of being to those who know how to perceive properly.⁴⁷ Unlike Plotinus or Augustine, Gregory usually does not privilege introspection but the careful observation of the visible world around him. This, incidentally, is borne out also by his many digressions about anatomical, astronomical and generally "scientific" problems. Gregory evidently experienced the world through the visual perception of its empirical reality, and in and through that reality, not by turning away from it, he sought to progress towards the intelligible and divine nature as the true centre and source of its being.

If human nature, therefore, is said to be created in God's image, this for Gregory means that it is the privileged gateway for this kind of perception. Seeing human persons endowed with mind and goodness, we can and ought to "see" God analogically in his intelligible and spiritual being and as the perfect goodness. And if the image is now darkened and disfigured as the consequence of human sin, this means that, conversely, it has become more difficult to "see through" their sensible appearance and perceive in and through them something of God's own beauty and goodness.

The economy of salvation, consequently, is the process by means of which this damage is undone; this it seems is what Gregory is saying in the present passage. Christ is the first fruits insofar as his humanity uniquely permits us a glimpse of the divine, according to Jn 1.14: "and we saw his glory".⁴⁸ The appearance of God in the flesh sets off the restoration of God's creation by establishing a human being whose *created* reality displays, as far as possible, the characteristics of the uncreated deity.

Behind this seeming simplicity there lurks, of course, a much more complicated issue. It is evident, and Gregory is fully aware of it, that for human beings to fulfil their potential of making God visible on earth requires their active,

46 *An et res* (GNO III/3 120).

47 J. Zachhuber, "Die Seele als Dynamis bei Gregor von Nyssa: Überlegungen zu seiner Schrift *De anima et resurrectione*", in: C. Sedmak—M. Bogaczyk-Vormayr (eds.), *Patristik und Resilienz: Frühchristliche Einsichten in die Seelenkraft*, Berlin-New York 2012, 211–232.

48 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 381,7–8).

volitional collaboration.⁴⁹ Otherwise the Fall into sinfulness would never have been possible in the first place.⁵⁰ Redemption, then, must involve both divine and human agency. It is more than a pedagogical programme for the moral improvement of humankind, but it is not achieved by divine fiat either. Gregory does not in the present place explain what this means for Christology, but is more explicit about the subsequent progression of salvation history in and through the church. How does he strike the balance between the two?

It is this very link he hopes to elucidate with the formula of first fruits and dough. While on the one hand emphasising divine agency—God drew frail human nature to himself in the unique act of the Incarnation, continues to “co-sanctify” (συναγιάζει⁵¹) the whole “dough” of human nature, and “nurtures” (τρέφών⁵²) his body, the church—Gregory equally makes it clear that this process involves the active collaboration of those who “unite themselves with God through participation in the mystery” (ένουμένων αὐτῷ κατὰ τὴν κοινωνίαν τοῦ μυστηρίου:⁵³ a reference to the Eucharist?). While he describes human membership in the church in rather passive terms (“being grafted as members onto the common body”⁵⁴), he mentions their faith as a prerequisite for this process.⁵⁵

Further down in the text of the same homily, Gregory returns to the same topic and enlarges on the consequences the “co-sanctification” has for the whole lump:

All these statements with their description of the bridegroom’s beauty point not to the invisible and incomprehensible realities of the Godhead but to the things that were revealed in the economy, when Deity, having put on human nature, was revealed on the earth and held converse with human beings. By their means, as the apostle says, “the invisible things of him [...] have been clearly apprehended in his works” (Rm 1.20) as revealed through the foundation of the cosmos that is the church. For the creation of the cosmos signifies the foundation of the church, in which, according to the word of the prophet, both a new heaven is created (which is “the firmament of faith in Christ” [cf. 2 Col 5],⁵⁶ as Paul says) and a new

49 *Perf* (GNO VIII/1 194,14–196,15).

50 For example, *Op hom XVI* (PG 44 184).

51 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 381,22).

52 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 382,2).

53 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 382,1).

54 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 382,3–4).

55 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 382,3).

56 Cf. Col 2.5: τὸ στερέωμα τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πίστεως ὑμῶν. Gregory saw here an echo of Gn 1.6–8, the creation of the “firmament”.

earth is established (cf. Is 65.17), which drinks “the rain that [...] falls upon it” (cf. Heb 6.7), and another humanity, renewed by the birth from above “after the image of its creator (cf. 3 Col 10) is fashioned [...]”.⁵⁷

Throughout his works, Gregory made use of the Pauline terminology of salvation as a new creation,⁵⁸ but there are no other passages in which the analogy is drawn and developed in such detail. The reason Gregory does it here becomes evident a little later when he explicitly asserts that the church as a new cosmos permits the perception of “him who is all in all”:

Well, then, just as the person who looks upon the perceptible cosmos and has grasped the Wisdom that is displayed in the beauty of these beings infers, on the basis of what the eye sees, the invisible Beauty and the well-spring of Wisdom, whose outflow contrived the natural order of what is, so too the person who attends to this new cosmos that appears in the creation of the church sees in it the One who is and is becoming “all in all” (cf. 1 Cor 15.28) as, by way of things our nature can take in and comprehend, he directs our knowledge toward that which cannot be contained.⁵⁹

At this point, a preliminary summary of Gregory’s position can be offered. Christ’s humanity is the primary means permitting us the perception of divine nature within the confines of the created order that is, in such a way as our nature can grasp it. Subsequently, the same function is increasingly fulfilled through the church, which is his body. By means of the various charisms present in it, this “new creation” in its turn makes the created order transparent for its divine creator.

In this account, in spite of Gregory’s occasional emphasis on human participation, salvific agency is primarily ascribed to God. God is and remains the author and the subject of the salvific dispensation. He reveals himself in human form in the Incarnation; he plants and nurtures his body, the church; he integrates people into this unit as members. In particular, Gregory is happy to draw on the analogy between the creation of the natural world and the “new creation” of the church without feeling the need to dwell too much on any dissimilarity between the two. And yet he is careful not to set divine agency in opposition to human action. Human faith and the cultivation of human virtues are described as corresponding responses to God’s initiative.

57 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 384,13–385,5; tr. Norris, 405–407).

58 2 Cor 5.17. E.g. *Eun III/2* 52–53 (GNO II 69,22–70,13).

59 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 385,22–386,9; tr. Norris, 407).

When set against earlier interpretations of the first fruits and the dough, the immediate impression is how closely Gregory follows the interpretation suggested by Origen: the first fruits is Jesus Christ, and the dough is the single human nature which he like his orthodox predecessor stipulates. More broadly reminiscent of Origen is Gregory's attempt to balance divine and human agency, the emphasis on Christ's continued sanctification of humanity and, particularly, the Church alongside the insistence on human free will and moral responsibility.

This apparent proximity of Gregory's teaching to his great Alexandrian forerunner, however, cannot conceal major differences between them. Notably, Gregory is very clear that the first fruits is not simply Christ but Christ's human nature. Throughout the passage, he inscribes his interpretation of Rm 11.16 into an Incarnational logic according to which the Logos assumes "the first fruits of our nature".

One major reason for this change must be the altered doctrinal context. Origen's exegesis of Rm 11.16 was strongly motivated by his opposition to the Gnostic idea of distinct classes of human beings. For Gregory, by contrast, the main danger is Arianism. In his own soteriology, he follows the lead of Athanasius' *De Incarnatione* with its emphasis on deification.⁶⁰ As for the patriarch of Alexandria before him, affirming the reality of *theosis* is ultimately an extension of the confession of the Son's full deity, and *vice versa*: as much as it is only the true Word of God who can save humankind, it is also the case that the transmission of his divine nature onto humanity and the ensuing overcoming of corruptibility are the most prominent effects of the Incarnation.

Unlike Athanasius, however, Gregory tends to respond to this problem by means of what Aloys Grillmeier has called a "divisive Christology" (*Trennungs-christologie*).⁶¹ This is evident in the present part of *Homily XIII* as throughout he speaks about divine and human as very nearly two different subjects in the saviour. It is within this overall framework that Gregory's insistence on Christ's *humanity* as the first fruits of our common nature must be understood. Within a Christology defined by the opposition between the *active* divine and the *passive* human element,⁶² the first fruits is part of the latter: it is what *is assumed*, not in itself part of divine agency.

60 Cf. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi*, 54.3.

61 A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* (tr. J. Bowden), Vol. 1, London 1975, 299.

62 Cf. J. Zachhuber, "Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 111/4", in: J. Leemans—M. Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium 111. An English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies*, Leiden 2014, 313–334, here esp. 319–321.

This might seem like a small change but it is easy to see how it can potentially have major consequences. Origen had wrestled the Pauline verse away from the Gnostics by insisting that “first fruits” as well as the “root” were divine (Son and Spirit); their holiness sanctified human nature. For Gregory, however, both first fruits and dough refer to humanity, and the question therefore arises what property of human nature can explain the transfer of holiness from the former to the latter? In the present context, this problem remains unaddressed because Gregory emphasises continued divine agency by way of his reference to 2 Cor 5.17 (the Church as a new creation), but this may simply indicate that the metaphor of first fruits and dough does as yet not play a major role in his argument. As a matter of fact, it would be hard to say quite what Gregory’s current references to Rm 11.16 are meant to achieve except to stress the coherence and identity between Christ’s humanity and ours.

b *Christ’s Humanity as First Fruits and Head of the Church*

If so far we have learned about Gregory’s conception of the Incarnation and salvation, we have not yet gleaned a more secure interpretation of Gregory’s understanding of the metaphor of first fruits and dough itself. What precisely is the relationship between Christ’s human nature and the subsequently sanctified humanity of those who are embraced by his body, the church? In what sense does the solidarity between first fruits and dough contribute to the salvific process?

Elsewhere in *Homily XIII*, Gregory makes again use of the metaphor of first fruits and dough.⁶³ The context is his exegesis of Ct 5.11 where the beauty of the beloved is described by comparing his head to “kephaz gold” (κεφαλὴν κεφαζ⁶⁴). Gregory, struggling with the Greek of the Septuagint, surmises that the original meaning is “pure gold”;⁶⁵ but what does this signify? He suggests that the emphasis is on purity, on the absence of “mixture with sullyng matter”⁶⁶ which, according to him, points once again to Christ, “but not according to the eternity of his divinity” but “according to the man who was the vessel of deity”.⁶⁷ In this sense, he observes, Paul called Christ the “head of his body, the church”.⁶⁸

63 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 390,10–393,11).

64 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 390,11).

65 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 390,11–14).

66 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 390,19).

67 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 390,22–391,2).

68 Col 1.18.

Therefore the head of the body that is the church, the first fruits of our entire nature, is this pure gold, unreceptive of any form of evil and unmixed with it.⁶⁹

The metaphor of first fruits and dough is thus explained with the help of yet another metaphor—Christ's humanity is the head of the body, which is the church. Gregory here does not give any further indication of how either of the two notions should be understood, and I suspect it would not be wise to bring in at this point more philosophical theories he proffers elsewhere.⁷⁰ So much, in any case, seems clear: the relationship he has in mind is one of organic or quasi-organic continuity; it is an asymmetric relationship in which the source or point of origin communicates its properties to those parts that are connected with it. They depend on this source and, while they truly share in its properties, they will not display them in the same purity.

Neither one nor the other of the two metaphors, however, provides a straight answer to the question of *what kind* the relationship in the case of Christ and his church is. Gregory's reference to Christ's ethical perfection in the present place and the mention of his sinlessness and truthfulness might suggest a spiritual link in which Christians emulate the virtuous life of Jesus. On the other hand, we have observed earlier Gregory's strong emphasis on divine agency throughout the whole process and his insistence that the church is God's new or second creation. Quite how these two elements come together, Gregory does not say and the metaphors he employs do not necessarily help clarify his meaning in the present place.

c *Gregory's Exegesis of the Good Samaritan in Homily XIV*

Gregory refers to first fruits and dough again at the very end of the fourteenth homily.⁷¹ The use of the term *πλῆσιον*, neighbour, in Ct 5.16 inspires Gregory to an allegorical interpretation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan.⁷² The robbed man is humanity, descended from an exalted place, fallen among the thieves, robbed of its "imperishable gown" (*ἄφθαρτον ἔνδυμα*⁷³) and left "half-dead"⁷⁴ which, according to Gregory, means that "death advanced to the middle of our nature as the soul remained immortal".⁷⁵

69 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 391,11–14; tr. Norris 413).

70 J. Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa*, 198 (see n. i above).

71 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 427,9–429,5).

72 Lk 10.25–37.

73 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 427,15).

74 ἡμιθανή: Lk 10.30.

75 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 427,16–17). I note as an aside an anti-sacrificial swipe in Gregory's com-

The Samaritan, of course, is Christ, more precisely the Logos,

Who wrapped the whole of humanity about him through the first fruits of the dough, in which there was a portion of every nation, of Jew and Samaritan and Greek and all human beings at once.⁷⁶

Gregory then goes on to explain the remaining details of the parable: the Samaritan's animal is Christ's body,⁷⁷ the inn is his love of humankind,⁷⁸ the two coins signify the love of God and neighbour.⁷⁹

At first sight, Gregory's use of the pair first fruits–dough in this passage is almost identical with the instances I have analysed before. In fact, the similarity goes straight to the wording with which Gregory describes Christ's assumption of human nature in the Incarnation.⁸⁰ And yet there are a number of interesting differences or at least nuances worthy of our attention.

Most interesting, perhaps, is the contrast between his earlier application of the “lump of dough” to the church as compared with his present mention of all humanity.⁸¹ One certainly should not draw too sharp a distinction; after all, Gregory in one earlier passage also spoke of “the dough (φύραμα) of the common nature”⁸² and contrasted Christ as the “head of the body, the church; the first fruits of our whole nature”.⁸³ Yet it is evident nonetheless that Gregory's intention in our previous passages from *Homily XIII* was to move on from Christ's transformation of human nature in the Incarnation to its continuation in the church. The church was the “new creation” which, derived from Christ's perfect humanity, displays the properties of human godlikeness and thus permits the perception of its creator. From the context, it appeared that the reference to first fruits and the whole lump of dough was meant to be read in this way although its precise interpretation, as I noted, was not spelled out by Gregory in those texts. In his exegesis of the Good Samaritan, by contrast, Gregory shows

ment that priest and Levite signify the “useless” law as “the blood of bulls and goats cannot absolve sin” (*ibidem*, 18–21).

76 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 427,21–428,2; tr. Norris 453).

77 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 428,2–3).

78 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 428,5–6).

79 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 428,11–13).

80 Cf. GNO VI 427,21–22: τὸν πᾶσαν τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν διὰ τῆς ἀπαρχῆς τοῦ φυράματος περιθήμενον' with 381,19–22: ἅπαξ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν διὰ τῆς ἀπαρχῆς ἐπεσπάσατο τὴν ἐπίκληρον τῆς σαρκὸς φύσιν, ἣν [...] ἀνέλαβεν [...].

81 See pp. 245–247 above.

82 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 381,22).

83 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 391,11–12).

less concern for those who specifically join his body. Instead, he focuses on the totality of humankind, symbolised by the robbed man. Human nature explicitly is the entirety of the human race; Gregory mentions the various nations that partake of it. The mythical nature of his account seems to compel him to this logic: all humanity is a single voiceless individual whose lot can only be improved by the application of condescending, agapeic care of which it is the passive recipient.

On closer inspection, things become if anything more complicated. For Gregory evidently struggles against these implications; in fact, the extent of his struggle can be measured by the implausibility of his exegetical claims. The inn of the parable, he suggests, is Christ's love for humanity: once a person enters into this place, Christ too will enter into them.⁸⁴ Later he claims that the coins left with the innkeeper for the care of the robbed man somehow imply that the latter too will be judged at the second coming of Christ on the basis of his fulfilment of the double command to love.⁸⁵

At the danger of judging harshly, both suggestions seem to me bizarre from an exegetical point of view: the gospel text just does not mention any activity on the part of the robbed man. Yet the very awkwardness of Gregory's interpretation may be significant, as it seems to indicate his awareness of the problematical consequences of a line of thought in which fallen humanity is reduced to a passive object of divine salvation.

Yet this is not all. Somehow, Gregory's decision to build into his argument the need for human fulfilment of the law as a correction against the tendency to demote humanity to an inanimate object, also jars with his account of redemption in the earlier homily which, as we have seen, maintained a focus on divine agency throughout. It almost seems as if Gregory's exposition of the history of salvation through the parable of the Good Samaritan pushes him into two opposite directions: on the one hand reconstructing redemption as a process in which humanity participates as a purely passive object; on the other hand, by stressing more strongly the need for human synergism in the redemptive process.

d *Gregory's Theocentric Understanding of Salvation*

In order to gain the right perspective for an assessment of the different accounts Gregory gives of human redemption in the passages analysed, it may be useful at this point to recall Gregory's overall purpose in the homilies: to

84 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 428,7–9).

85 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 428,13–429,5).

account for human spiritual perfection. As he explained, the *Song of Songs* was written for those already progressing on the road towards purification.⁸⁶ Through his homilies, he seeks to elucidate the details of this human journey towards God. He is therefore, inevitably, concerned with human development in all its ambiguity, the need to be motivated, the tendency to slacken or even falter, the risk of being distracted, and so forth.

It is significant, then, that in this very context, Gregory's account of redemption is so strongly theocentric given that one *might* easily have suspected that the ascetic context would have tempted him to emphasise the human aspect of salvific history. Yet if anything he appears to do the exact opposite stressing divine agency throughout this process. This could be observed in all the texts we have looked at, albeit in various ways. It can be confirmed most strikingly by a quick glance at a famous text towards the end of the entire commentary.⁸⁷ Gregory there illustrates the different degrees of perfection by speaking of redemption as a "second creation", echoing his earlier language of the church as the "new creation". For this "second creation", Gregory uses the terminology otherwise known from his cosmology: there is special and temporal spacing (διαστηματική παράτασις⁸⁸) so things do not happen at the same time but unfold and develop over time.⁸⁹ This development occurs in a logical progression (ἀκολουθία⁹⁰) so there will be some who are already nearing perfection while others are only at the beginning of their spiritual path. While Gregory in the same context does refer these differences to human volition (προαίρησις), it is nevertheless striking how strongly there too he emphasises divine agency by construing this history in strict analogy to the evolutionary unfolding of material creation from God's initial creative impulse.

This perspective seems to chime particularly well with Gregory's soteriological texts in *Homily XIII*, as they seemed to integrate the Christ event into a salvific dispensation whose chief agent is the Logos. Assuming the "first fruits" of humanity which then becomes the head of a "body", the community of those who permit themselves to be connected with him. This community is described as a "new creation" and thus ascribed in its existence to the activity of the Logos. In this scheme however, as we have noticed, it is difficult, almost impossible to discern what precisely Gregory has in mind when he speaks of first fruits and lump of dough. He does not dwell on any link between Christ's and our human-

86 *Cant I* (GNO VI 14,13–15,2).

87 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 457,19–460,2).

88 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 458,20–21).

89 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 459,17).

90 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 458,16).

ity to explain the progress of salvation from the “head” to the “body” except for the most general and probably merely formulaic mention of “our nature”.

Things are somewhat different in Gregory’s exegesis of the Good Samaritan. There the allusion to human nature as *one* unit seems more evident and Gregory’s allusion to first fruits and lump of dough therefore appears to carry more weight. Interestingly, we have seen that Gregory immediately adds to this with an emphasis on human need to act in correspondence with the divine gift.

4 Conclusion

It is at this point that we can return to the question posed at the outset of this essay. Is there any justification for Wilhelm Herrmann’s charge that Gregory’s understanding of salvation is “physical”? Is there evidence that Gregory construes the transmission of salvation from Jesus Christ to the rest of humanity in such a way that leaves no room for human agency and that he overemphasises human co-operation in the salvific process in a seeming attempt to compensate for that physical tendency?

The brief answer to all these questions must be yes. As we have seen, Gregory uses the metaphor of first fruits and dough in a way that leaves him open to precisely this accusation. Unlike for Origen, the first fruits for Gregory is Christ’s humanity, and as his exegesis of the Good Samaritan has shown, he is willing to think of the cohesion of Christ’s humanity with human nature in its entirety as the basis of the spread of human salvation from the saviour to redeemed humanity. Furthermore, he then seemed to emphasise good works as required for salvation in such a way that made little sense either exegetically or theologically.

And yet this is not the full answer to our initial question. For while Gregory clearly is willing to adopt a physical account, he also has recourse to a very different soteriology, as we have seen in the texts from *Homily XIII*. There he offered a much more consistently theocentric account of salvation in which God continues as the agent of salvation beyond the historical Incarnation. This was expressed by way of an elaboration of the notion of the Church as a “new creation”, an imagery that was reiterated at the end of *Homily XIV*. Interestingly, this theocentric soteriology enabled Gregory to refer to human activity and moral perfection as well, and in a much more plausible way than in his exegesis of the Good Samaritan.

It is nevertheless remarkable that Gregory’s use of first fruits and dough is not very pronounced in the latter group of texts. Herrmann was probably therefore right to find in his references to Rm 11.16 an indication of Gregory’s

“physical” tendencies.⁹¹ Still, his charge against Gregory could and should have been more nuanced recognising the presence of more than one soteriological argument in his work indeed, as we have seen, sometimes in one and the same work.

At the same time Gregory’s use of the physical model is in itself sufficiently worrying to raise the question of its historical and systematic origin. Various answers have been given to this question: Harnack saw the overall impact of Platonism as crucial, whereas Reinhard M. Hübner sought to blame indirect Gnostic influence.⁹² Given, however, that Gregory’s major conceptual innovation with regard to the Pauline metaphor was the identification of the first fruits with Christ’s *humanity*, it is arguable that the problematical character of his Christology has to be considered a main factor.

The Nyssen was extremely concerned with the utter transcendence of the Logos to stem Arian notions of his ontological inferiority to the Father. He therefore avoided the unitive Christology found in Irenaeus or Athanasius seeking instead to preserve a dual perspective on the divine and the human throughout. As a consequence, he lacked a conception of what would later be called the hypostatic let alone a personal union; he was effectively unable to speak of the saviour as one single subject.

It would seem that this tendency to separate Christ “according to his deity” and “according to his humanity” led to an analogous bifurcation of his soteriology with separate effects ascribed to Christ’s divinity and to his humanity. Yet as Christ’s human nature was altogether passive and merely “assumed” and “divinised” by the Logos, its soteriological effects could only be conceptualised as those of a quasi-agent or even a pseudo-agent: an impersonal universal nature in which salvation spreads from the first fruits to the whole dough. While any soteriology has to reckon with the systematic significance of the solidarity between Christ’s humanity and ours, this problem is exacerbated by Gregory’s reluctance to think of the saviour as a single, divine-human person. If Christ is the first fruits of all humankind—as Origen suggested—it must be as this one individual, paradoxically and inseparably uniting God and the human being.

91 See above at n. 1.

92 R.M. Hübner, *Die Einheit des Leibes Christi bei Gregor von Nyssa*, 315–324.

Bibliography

- Aland, B. "Erwählungstheologie und Menschenklassenlehre", in: M. Krause (ed.), *Gnosis and Gnosticism*, Leiden 1981, 148–181.
- Ashley, T.R. *The Book of Numbers*, Grand Rapids, MI 1993.
- Bingham, J. "Irenaeus Reads Romans 8: Resurrection and Renovation", in: K.L. Gaca—L.L. Welborn (eds.), *Early Patristic Readings*, New York—London 2005, 114–133.
- Bray, G. (ed.). *Romans*, Illinois 1998.
- Dorner, I.A. *Entwicklungsgeschichte der Lehre von der Person Jesu Christi von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die neueste dargestellt*, Vol. 1, Stuttgart 1845–1853.
- Gordon, B.D. "On the Sanctity of Mixtures and Branches: Two Halakic Sayings in Romans 11:16–24", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 135 (2016) 355–368.
- Grillmeier, A. *Christ in Christian Tradition* (trans. J. Bowden), vol. 1, London 1975.
- Harnack, A. *History of Dogma* (trans. N. Buchanan), Vol. 3, London 1894–1899.
- Herrmann, W. *Gregorii Nysseni sententiae de salute adipiscenda*, Halle/s 1875.
- Hübner, R.M. *Die Einheit des Leibes Christi bei Gregor von Nyssa: Untersuchungen zum Ursprung der "physischen" Erlösungslehre*, Leiden 1974.
- Keck, L. *Romans*, Nashville (TN) 2005.
- Koschorke, K. *Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum*, Leiden 1978.
- Leonhardt, J. *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria*, Tübingen 2001.
- Maraval, P. "Chronology of Works", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 153–169.
- Mühlenberg, E. "Synergism in Gregory of Nyssa", *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 68 (1977) 93–122.
- Ritschl, A. *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, Vol. 1, Bonn 1888.
- Ritter, A.M. "Die Gnadenlehre Gregors von Nyssa nach seiner Schrift 'Über das Leben des Mose'", in: H. Dörrie—M. Altenburger—U. Schramm (eds.), *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie*, Leiden 1976, 195–239.
- Scheck, T.P. *Origen, Homilies on Numbers*, Illinois 2009.
- Zachhuber, J. *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa: Philosophical Background and Theological Significance*, Leiden 1999;
- Zachhuber, J. "Phyrama", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 733–737;
- Zachhuber, J. "Die Seele als Dynamis bei Gregor von Nyssa: Überlegungen zu seiner Schrift *De anima et resurrectione*", in: C. Sedmak—M. Bogaczyk-Vormayr (eds.), *Patristik und Rezilienz: Frühchristliche Einsichten in die Seelenkraft*, Berlin-New York 2012, 211–232;
- Zachhuber, J. "Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 111/4", in: J. Leemans—M. Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium 111. An English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies*, Leiden 2014, 313–334.

Theology of Baptism in the *In Canticum Canticorum* of Gregory of Nyssa

Everett Ferguson

Gregory of Nyssa in his homilies on *Canticles* makes few explicit references to “baptism”, but there are many allusions. I begin with the citation of clearly baptismal texts.¹

At the beginning of the first homily Gregory identifies his hearers as “you who have ‘put on’ our Lord Jesus Christ himself (Gal 3.27).”² He later repeats the allusion in commenting on Ct 4.14 as “a statement that testifies that she [the bride] has put on Christ (Gal 3.27).”³

A more explicit baptismal reference occurs in the interpretation of “I am dark and beautiful” in Ct 1.5. Christ came “calling sinners to repentance.”⁴ The association of baptism with repentance is elaborated in the statement that Christ caused his bride, who was dark and later became bright, “to shine like stars (Phil 2.15) by the laver of rebirth (cf. Tit 3.5) when he had washed off their dark appearance with water.”⁵ Tit 3.5 and its phrase “laver of rebirth”, or better “regeneration,” provided Gregory’s favorite description of baptism.⁶ Repentance for Gregory involved a change of life.

Gregory uses the word “baptism” in his quotation of Rm 6.4. The myrrh and frankincense of Ct 4.8–15 reminded Gregory of death, so he says that the bride was “‘buried’ with me [Christ] ‘by baptism into death’.”⁷ He adds, “For this frankincense, which you have come to share through the resurrection, is for you the beginning of faith, the beginning of a journey toward higher levels of

1 For the practice and doctrine of baptism in Gregory of Nyssa see E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*, Grand Rapids 2009; Id., “The Doctrine of Baptism in Gregory of Nyssa’s *Oratio Catechetica*”, in: S.E. Porter and A.R. Cross (eds.), *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies*, London 2002, 224–234.

2 *Cant I* (GNO VI 14,18–19). I use the translation of R.A. Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Greco-Roman World 13, Atlanta 2012, and the Greek text edited by H. Langerbeck, GNO VI, Leiden 1960.

3 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 280,10).

4 Lk 5.32.

5 *Cant II* (GNO VI 48,18–49,4).

6 References in Ferguson, *Baptism*, 608–609.

7 Rm 6.4. *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 249,13–14).

goodness”.⁸ The passage reiterates the characteristic theme of Gregory’s spirituality, perfection as continual progress in participation in the good: “Since, then, you have already attained to this height, do not stop in your ascent as though you have already achieved perfection by these accomplishments”.⁹ The association of myrrh with death, prompted by Ct 5.5–6, occasions another citation of Rm 6.4. Gregory puts in the mouth of the Bride the words explaining how she opened the door to the Bridegroom: “I have risen up by being ‘buried with him through baptism into his death’,¹⁰ for the resurrection does not become actual if it is not preceded by voluntary death”.¹¹ By affirming the voluntary nature of repentance (turning from sin), faith, and baptism Gregory reasserts his common theme of free will.¹²

The passage at the beginning of the preceding paragraph mentioning the myrrh combines the Pauline idea of baptism as death and resurrection with the Johannine idea of birth from above. The words “Come and pass through from the beginning of faith, from the peak of Sanir and Hermon”¹³ are said to intimate “the mystery of the birth from above”, Jn 3.3,¹⁴ for “the stream that flows out of these springs is for us the beginning of our being remodeled for existence at the level of the divine”,¹⁵ the connection made with water a sure indication of the baptismal interpretation of Jn 3.5.

Gregory in the same context alludes to the baptism of Jesus: “displaying the soul’s situation prior to the frankincense and the beginning of faith and before the mysteries made known to us at the Jordan”.¹⁶ One notes the recurring association of faith with baptism, in this context prompted by the phrase “the beginning of faith” in Gregory’s Greek text of Ct 4.8.

8 *Ibidem*, 250,2–5. Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 263, n. 6, understands the “beginning of faith” as referring to baptism.

9 *Ibidem*, 249,21–250, 2. Cf. *Vita Moysis* 1.5–6; 2.225, 242, 305–314; E. Ferguson, “Progress in Perfection: Gregory of Nyssa’s *Vita Moysis*”, *Studia Patristica* 14 (1976) 307–314 and Id., “God’s Infinity and Man’s Mutability: Perpetual Progress According to Gregory of Nyssa”, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 18 (1973) 59–78.

10 Cf. Rm 6.4.

11 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 343,8–10).

12 J. Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1953; A.J. Malherbe—E. Ferguson, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Life of Moses*, The Classics of Western Spirituality, New York 1978, 16–17, 157 n. 5.

13 Ct 4.8.

14 Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 263, rightly takes the ἀνωθεν as “from above” rather than “again,” but see below for my preference for begetting over birth and for another association of this experience with mystery.

15 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 250,10,13–15).

16 *Ibidem*, 251,18–20.

One of the rare occurrences of the word βάπτισμα occurs in the commentary on Ct 5.3, "I have removed my tunic. How shall I put in on? I have washed my feet. How shall I soil them?" Gregory brings out a lesson from the baptismal ritual of removing clothing by affirming the need to remove "the garment of our dead humanity" and walk on the road "on which the Lord washes with water the feet of those who walk it and dries them with the towel that girds his waist".¹⁷ He further explains, "You perceive clearly, then what these words convey: that she who has once and for all, through baptism, taken off her sandals (for it is the proper business of a baptizer to loose the thongs of those who are wearing sandals [...]), she has had her feet washed and has shed, with her sandals, all earthly filth".¹⁸ Thus Gregory insists on there being only one baptism and refers to the baptizer as the instrument by which "the thong of sin" is removed from a person.

The Nyssen refers to one biblical account of Christian baptism, that of Cornelius and his household,¹⁹ describing it in terms previously presented. His homily on the words of Ct 5.13 about the Bridegroom are applied in this way:

In the same way did the great Peter give utterance once before Cornelius to the radiant lilies of the message and filled the souls of his auditors with myrrh; and they, as soon as they had received the word, were buried together with Christ by baptism, becoming dead to ordinary life. And one can find thousands of additional examples of saints who, blossoming out with the lilies of the word, became a mouth for the common body of the church and filled their hearers with the myrrh that does the passions to death.²⁰

Gregory here refers to the need for speaking the word by teachers who are the "mouth" of the body that is the church, a word that leads hearers faith. He again describes baptism as a burial together with Christ.²¹ Death to sin is a death to the passions.²²

These citations and allusions to biblical passages pertaining to baptism introduce the motifs characteristic of Gregory's theology of baptism. Early on

17 Jn 13.5. *Cant XI* (GNO VI 330,17–20).

18 *Ibidem*, 331,3–10.

19 Acts 10.47–48.

20 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 405,11–18).

21 From Rm 6.4.

22 A.J. Malherbe—E. Ferguson, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 10, 16, 17–18 on the passions and parallel thoughts to this passage in the *Vit Moys*.

in the treatise, referring to marriage customs, Gregory lists the “wedding gifts”, “the divine gifts of grace” brought to the betrothed virgin:

[R]emission of transgressions, forgetfulness of misdeeds, removal of sin, transformation of nature, change of the corruptible into the incorruptible, the delight of paradise, the honor of a kingdom, joy without end.²³

Such lists were common among the Cappadocian preachers.²⁴

Quite frequent and to be expected is the theme of washing, naturally associated with water and reinforced by Tit 3.5, the verse that gave Gregory his common word for the baptismal pool. The Nyssen found in the Mosaic tabernacle imagery of the Christian system,²⁵ including the imagery of baptism: “fonts [λουτήρες] for the washing of souls”; before entering the holy of holies there is “washing off in the bath [λουτήρι] of reason all the filth of shameful thinking”; Moses enjoined that one who “touched some dead and abominable thought washes [πλύνη] the garment of conscience”.²⁶ Isrel’s purifications at Mount Sinai²⁷ prompted the comparison, “[S]o now, in our own case, [...] the sense contained in the words has been washed [ἐκπλύναι] and scrubbed to remove the filth of the flesh”.²⁸

The motifs of washing and illumination are combined in comments on the Ethiopian queen who came to Solomon.²⁹ “Israel closed its eyes to the light”, but “Those of the Gentiles who approach by way of faith and who once were far off draw near, having washed off [ἀποκλυσάμενοι] their darkness in the mystical water”.³⁰ Gregory never divorces the effects of baptism from faith. Also, he repeatedly in these homilies uses the language of “mystery” for the spiritual interpretation of *Canticles*, and he occasionally uses that language in reference to baptism, here indicating that the water conveyed a spiritual benefit beyond the mere washing of the flesh. The same combination occurs in *Homily XI*, where the Bride is said to become “beautiful and good, illumined by the light of truth and cleansed [ἀποκλυσσάμενη] by water from the darkness of ignorance”.³¹ Here the illumination is explicitly ascribed to the teaching of truth

23 *Cant I* (GNO VI 24,4–9).

24 Basil of Caesarea, *Homiliae in hexaemeron* 5; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40.3.

25 Cf. *Vit Moys* 2.170–183.

26 *Cant II* (GNO VI 45,2.6–8.13–15).

27 Ex 19.10–11.

28 *Cant III* (GNO VI 71,14–18).

29 1Ki 10.1–13.

30 *Cant VII* (GNO VI 205,12–16).

31 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 323,20–324,2).

that accompanied baptism. The word “mystic” occurs immediately before the quoted statement with reference to the “mystical kiss” that brought “her mouth to the fount of light”.³²

The motif of washing³³ predominates in the discussion that follows the quotation at the beginning of the preceding paragraph. The loveliness of the Bride’s teeth are likened to shorn sheep “as they come up from the washing [λουτρού]”,³⁴ a statement followed by the quotation of Ct 4.2.³⁵ These are sheep “whose bodily filth has been washed off” [ἀποκλυσσάμεναις] in the font [λουτρῶ].³⁶ The fullest statement is made in reference to bishops (the “teeth” of the church): they must “first of all [...] be shorn (that is stripped of every material burden) and second, in virtue of the washing [λουτρῶ] of conscience, to be free of any fleshly or spiritual spot”.³⁷ This statement brings out the effect of baptism in cleansing not just the body but especially the conscience (of guilt).

The themes of washing and clothing with their relation to the divine Word, the instruction that accompanies the water, and the resultant new manner of life continue in the further comments on Ct 5.3, following the quotation above. Gregory explains that he uses “flesh” to refer to the “old humanity”,³⁸ “which the divine apostle commands to be stripped off and put aside by those who are going to wash off [ἀποκλύζεσθαι] the filth of the soul’s feet in the bath [λουτρῶ] of the Word”. He adds, “And when the Word has entered her, the soul makes him her garment in accordance with the instruction of the apostle [...] “to put on the new” tunic”.³⁹ [S]he whose feet have been washed [νιψάμενη] will never again walk in the defilement of earthly things.⁴⁰

The motif of regeneration from Tit 3.5, as noted at the beginning of this paper, was a favorite concept in Gregory of Nyssa. Thus he says that the Word (Logos) by regeneration (παλιγγενεσις) changes us.⁴¹ In his *Homilies on Canticles*, however, Gregory employs more often the more common words for begetting and birth.

32 *Ibidem*, 323,19–20.

33 λουτρού from Ct 4.2.

34 *Cant VII* (GNO VI 224,19).

35 *Ibidem*, 225,1–3.

36 *Ibidem*, 225,19–20.

37 *Cant VII* (GNO VI 227,11–14).

38 Col 3.9.

39 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 328,1–10).

40 *Ibidem*, 329,15.

41 *Cant VII* (GNO VI 209,18–19).

“Those who have been begotten [γεννηθέντες] from the Spirit become “sons of light” and “sons of the day” (cf. 1 Ts 5.5).⁴² The renewal from baptism is alluded to in the phrase “birth [or begetting] from above [ἄνωθεν γεννήσεως].”⁴³ The imagery of birth fits the statement that the Bridegroom has espoused us to himself “in the mystic rebirth [μυστικῆς ἀναγεννήσεως]” (cf. “mysteries” in line 13)).⁴⁴ Another occurrence of the phrase “birth from above” [ἄνωθεν γεννήσεως] is found in describing the renewal of the new humanity into the image of the Creator.⁴⁵ The fact that all these references to birth are derived from Jn 3.3–5 and refer to baptism is made clear by the phrase “birth out of water [ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος γέννησις]” for Jesus’ baptism.⁴⁶ This imagery of birth accords with the emphasis on baptism as the beginning of the spiritual life leading to eternal progress in perfection. Similarly the language of “children” is employed for the procession of the church in the virtuous life,⁴⁷ cited in the next paragraph on enlightenment.

The connection of illumination with washing is noted above; but this motif also occurs by itself. The “illumination [ἐλλάμψεως] of the Word”⁴⁸ would be the enlightenment given by the Logos.⁴⁹ A baptismal allusion is more obvious in the statement that “the shining grace of enlightenment [φωτισματος, a conventional term for baptism] by means of which we become children who are [...] carried up from earth toward the heavenly life”.⁵⁰ “Grace” occurs frequently in connection with baptism in Gregory’s writings.⁵¹

42 *Cant VII* (GNO VI 240,2–3). Here I depart from Norris’s translation, which reads “born of the Spirit.” The concept is derived from John 3:3–5, commonly rendered “born again,” but I understand the emphasis to be on a begetting from above (see next quotation in the text) and Gregory’s wording, παρὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, “from or by the Spirit,” favors that interpretation.

43 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 263,16).

44 *Cant XI* (GNO VI 318,8–9).

45 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 385,4–7).

46 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 390,4). In this passage Gregory makes one of his frequent references to the three births of Christ, citing Col 1.15; Rom 8.29; and Col 1.18 (where he uses παλιγγενεσία for the birth from the dead). See E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 607 for παλιγγενεσία and ἀναγέννησις used interchangeably by Gregory and 610 for the three births.

47 *Cant II* (GNO VI 52,8–53,2).

48 *Cant I* (GNO VI 40,5).

49 R.A. Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 43, n. 27, understands the “kiss” in this passage (Ct 1.2) as symbolic of baptism, which would fit the emphasis on instruction accompanying baptism elsewhere in these homilies.

50 *Cant II* (GNO VI 52,17–53,2).

51 E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 613 for illumination, or enlightenment, and grace, or gift, elsewhere in Gregory.

Rm 6.4, as noted above, made death a motif of baptismal theology, and in these homilies the anointing of the dead with myrrh is the occasion for developing this theme. The quotation of Ct 5.5 prompts the comment, “No one who is in touch with the divine Scriptures will have any doubt that myrrh is a symbol of death”.⁵² Thus myrrh stands for “the mortification of bodily passions that comes about through choice that originates in oneself”,⁵³ and “the myrrh that flows from the mouth (Ct 5.13) and fills the receptive soul is an image for the mortification of the body, since [...] the term “myrrh” signifies death”.⁵⁴ The lesson that Gregory wants to teach is what Paul⁵⁵ and Jesus⁵⁶ taught “that death must precede life, so that life cannot find a place within the human person unless it make its entrance by way of death”.⁵⁷ And this change requires a person’s free choice.

The association of baptism with healing comes out in the way Gregory transfers the restoration of Paul’s sight at his conversion to his baptism.

The material of which he [Paul] was made put off its earthly character from the time when, in baptism, he cast off the scales on his eyes together with the flesh. He was reconstituted of fragrant spice by becoming a child of the Holy Spirit. [...] [H]e no longer had need of a human being to infuse into him a knowledge of the mysteries.⁵⁸

The statement brings in other motifs that we have seen were important for Gregory—removal of the earthly by one’s choice, made new, becoming a child, the work of the Holy Spirit, and all this as a mystery of God’s working.

As an Old Testament image of baptism Gregory follows the established typology of Israel crossing the Red Sea and the Egyptians drowning in its waters.⁵⁹ Ct 1.9 is applied to his hearers:

We, who have accepted the Word [...] and have prevailed against the Egyptian cavalry [...] and have drowned all their evil powers in the water, should in this way be made like that Power, having left the opposing host, like some impurity, behind in the water.

52 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 347,13–15).

53 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 344,1–3).

54 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 404,10–15).

55 Rm 6.4–5.

56 Jn 12.24.

57 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 345,9–11).

58 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 403,2–8).

59 Ex 14.15–29.

But so that we may more clearly understand what is meant, it is something like this: one cannot become like the horse by which the chariots of the Egyptians were plunged into the deep unless, liberated by the mystical water from the enemy's enslavement, one leaves behind in the water every Egyptianizing thought and every alien sin and rises up purified, bringing along in one's subsequent life nothing of the Egyptian self-awareness.⁶⁰

Gregory here echoes specifically Origen's interpretation.⁶¹ Baptism represents the overthrow of evil powers, is the destruction of sin in one's life, and thus is liberating. We note again Gregory's insistence on the meaning of baptism for one's subsequent life.

There are no explicit references to the liturgy of baptism, but the last passage fits the practice of immersion.⁶² The baptismal instruction and confession of faith likely influence the wording, "The virgin, then, when she has received these divine gifts from their good bearers, who have brought them to her through the prophetic teaching, both confesses [ὁμολογεί] her desire and calls upon grace to hasten".⁶³ The extensive discussion in *Homily XI* of clothing, removing the old garment of flesh and putting on the divine garment⁶⁴ and further in the citation above on *baptisma*, accords with the practice of removing clothing for the immersions and putting on new clothing afterward. The prominence given to the interpretation of myrrh in the text of *Canticles* accords with the practice of a baptismal anointing. Similarly the attention to the kiss as standing for baptism may reflect the giving of a kiss in welcoming the newly baptized into the fellowship of the church. Thus in reference to Ct 1.2 Gregory says, "[H]e who [...] wills all to be saved wants none of those who are being saved to be deprived of such a kiss, for this kiss cleanses away all filth".⁶⁵

That baptism seems to provide a subtext for much of Gregory's spiritual interpretation of *Canticles* testifies to its importance for Gregory and suggests the freshness of the experience to the minds of his hearers.

60 *Cant III* (GNO VI 76,16–77,8).

61 Origen, *Homeliae in Exodum*, 5.5.

62 See Ferguson, *Baptism*, 607–608, for evidence in Gregory of immersion (specifically three dippings).

63 *Cant I* (GNO VI 24,9–12); cf. *Cant XI* (GNO VI 328,12) for ὁμολογία.

64 *Cant XI* (GNO 328,1–329,14).

65 *Cant I* (GNO VI 33,2–5).

Bibliography

- Ferguson, E. "God's Infinity and Man's Mutability: Perpetual Progress According to Gregory of Nyssa", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 18 (1973) 59–78;
- Ferguson, E. "Progress in Perfection: Gregory of Nyssa's *Vita Moysis*", *Studia Patristica* 14 (1976) 307–314;
- Ferguson, E. "The Doctrine of Baptism in Gregory of Nyssa's *Oratio Catechetica*", in: S.E. Porter and A.R. Cross (eds.), *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies*, London 2002, 224–234;
- Ferguson, E. *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*, Grand Rapids 2009.
- Gaith, J. *La conception de la liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1953.
- Malherbe, A.J.—E. Ferguson, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Life of Moses*, The Classics of Western Spirituality, New York 1978.
- Norris, R.A. *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Greco-Roman World 13, Atlanta 2012.

The Metaphor of the Mirror in Platonic Tradition and Gregory's *Homilies on the Song of Songs**

Lenka Karfíková

“By approaching the archetypal beauty, you have become beautiful. Just like a mirror you have taken on my appearance”, says the divine bridegroom to his bride in Gregory's fourth homily on the *Song of Songs*.¹ In this quote we find summarised what Gregory also calls the “philosophy” (φιλοσοφία) of the *Song of Songs*.² As we know from others of his works, by the term “philosophy” Gregory also implies “contemplation” or even “the monastic life”.³ This does not mean, however, that in his interpretation of the *Song of Songs* philosophical motifs and borrowings from ancient thought, especially those of Platonic provenance, would be absent. It is exactly from this perspective that I mean to approach Gregory's homilies. First, I will introduce “the philosophy of the *Song of Songs*” as Gregory understands it and point out the Platonic inspiration of his project. After that I will turn to the metaphor of the soul as a mirror and attempt to show in more detail the similarities and differences between Gregory and his Platonic predecessors (Plato and Plotinus).

1 The Philosophy of the Song of Songs

We can perhaps paraphrase the core of Gregory's “philosophical” interpretation of the *Song of Songs* as follows: “The bride” soul was originally created as a beautiful image of a beautiful archetype,⁴ that is, of the divine Logos, and was therefore adorned with immortality.⁵ Only she did not keep her beauty

* This study is a result of the research funded by the Czech Science Foundation as the project GA ČR P401/12/G168 “History and Interpretation of the Bible”.

1 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 103,18–104,2): πλησιάσασα δὲ τῷ ἀρχετύπῳ κάλλει καὶ αὐτὴ καλὴ γέγονας οἶόν τι κάτοπτρον τῷ ἐμῷ χαρακτῆρι ἐμμορφωθείσα.

2 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 17,10f.; 18,9); *Cant* II (GNO VI 44,9f.); *Cant* III (GNO VI 93,12–14); *Cant* V (GNO VI 137,5).

3 On this, see *Macr* (GNO VIII/1 371; 379; 381) and elsewhere in the same work. I have dealt with this question elsewhere. Cf. L. Karfíková, “Gregory of Nyssa, Witness of Macrina's Life and Death”, *Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis, Theologica Olomucensia*, 14 (2013) 15–26.

4 *Cant* XII (GNO VI 348,1f.): τί γὰρ ἂν ἕτερον οὕτως εἶη καλὸν ὥς τὸ τοῦ ἀκηράτου κάλλους ὁμοίωμα; See also *Cant* XV (GNO VI 439,17–20).

5 *Cant* V (GNO VI 152,18–153,2); *Cant* XII (GNO VI 348,1–9).

but lost it through her voluntary turning (προαίρεσις) to sensual things⁶ (as the human soul is located “at the border” of the spiritual and physical nature and can therefore turn to both⁷). The journey towards regaining that beauty cannot, according to Gregory, take place without a continual turning away from the sphere of the senses.⁸ The soul is not only an image of the divine archetype but is a mirror in which is always reflected that which the soul is turned to.⁹ More accurately, it is a living mirror endowed with free will (τὸ προαιρετικὸν τε καὶ ἔμψυχον κάτοπτρον).¹⁰ In order for the archetypal divine beauty to shine in it once more, the mirror of the soul must turn in the appropriate direction and also purify itself and dispose itself of all that is unnecessary:¹¹ the “foxes in the vineyard” of human nature must be caught;¹² bodily desires that prevent the beauty of the soul from emerging must be put to flight;¹³ and “the garment of skin” put on after the first sin must be removed.¹⁴ Being rid of the passions directed to sensual things is not therefore a goal but a means—a kind of therapy that returns the soul to its original beauty. Gazing on the Logos unifies the soul (and so confers beauty upon it), whereas the passions, directed towards sensuality, reflect the un-unified, manifold nature of this realm.¹⁵

6 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 103,15f.): οὕτω τοίνυν ἐχούσης ἡμῶν τῆς προαιρέσεως, ὡς κατ’ ἐξουσίαν ἔχειν ὅπερ ἂν ἐθέλῃ τοῦτω συσχηματίζεσθαι.

7 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 333,13–334,5). Cf. Plotinus, *Enneades* III 2 (47), 8,9–11; 4,36–38; II 9 (33), 2,5–10.

8 See especially *Cant* IV (GNO VI 101,20–106,4); *Cant* V (GNO VI 150,9–151,2); *Cant* XV (GNO VI 439,2–440,10). Also on this, J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique: Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1944, 222–235; Id., “La Colombe et la Ténèbre”, *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 23 (1955) 389–418, esp. 393–396; A. Capboscq, *Schönheit Gottes und des Menschen: Theologische Untersuchung des Werkes In Canticum Canticorum von Gregor von Nyssa aus der Perspektive des Schönen und des Guten*, Frankfurt a. M. 2000, esp. 185–203.

9 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 104,2–10; cited below, note 107); *Cant* V (GNO VI 150,11–13); *Cant* XV (GNO VI 440,1–10).

10 *Cant* XV (GNO VI 440,7f.).

11 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 104,10–15); *Cant* XV (GNO VI 440,4–7).

12 *Cant* V (GNO VI 167,15–168,5). Cf. *Ct* 2,15.

13 *Cant* VI (GNO VI 192,5–7). Cf. *Ct* 3,7–8.

14 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 327,14f.). In the image “the garment of skin” (τὸν δερμάτινον χιτῶνα) Gregory combines *Ct* 5,3 and *Gn* 3,21. Unlike Philo (*Quaest Gen* 1 53) and perhaps Origen (*Hom Lev* VI 2, GCS, Origenes VI 362,14–19), Gregory does not understand the garment of skin’ with which the Lord dressed the first human couple after they had sinned in terms of corporeality but rather in terms of its animalistic character, especially with respect to the passions and mortality of the body. On this motif, see J. Daniélou, *Platonisme*, 60–65; Id., “La Colombe”, 390–393. Gregory states elsewhere that the soul removes the veil in order to be able to contemplate beauty. Cf. *Cant* XII (GNO VI 360,17–20).

15 *Cant* VIII (GNO VI 259,6–260,10).

Seeking instruction on how to achieve perfect *apatheia* (the removal of passions) in the biblical *Song of Songs* may, to today's reader, seem somewhat farfetched. For Gregory, however, it was quite natural to read this book through the prism of Origen's idea of the three works of Solomon, where *Proverbs* educates the reader in the basics of ethics, *Ecclesiastes* in the principles of natural science, and only after these two can the *Song of Songs* initiate him into epoptics, that is, the highest mysteries of union with God.¹⁶ Like Origen, Gregory oscillates in his allegoresis between a psychagogic and an ecclesiological interpretation, but does not consistently adhere to either interpretive plan and does not (unlike Origen) differentiate between the divine Logos as the bridegroom of the soul and the incarnate Christ as the bridegroom of the church.¹⁷ On a number of occasions, Gregory calls the allegorical interpretation of the *Song of Songs* "philosophy" (φιλοσοφία),¹⁸ perhaps in order to express that it represents a transfer of the meaning of material images onto spiritual realities, as he also says.¹⁹

The "philosophy" of the *Song of Songs* therefore has a practical meaning: it leads the soul to union with God, that is, to divinization or the likeness of God, which is, for Gregory, "the very end of a virtuous life";²⁰ it teaches "lovers of transcendent beauty how to relate to the divine".²¹

Although Gregory generally agrees with the Platonic requirement of the "purification of the soul from the body"²² and the stoic and neo-Platonic ideal

16 *Cant* I (GNO VI 18,7–23,1). Cf. Origen, *Commentarium In Canticum*, prol. 3,1–16 (SC 375, 128–138). The term "epoptics" is probably a loanword denoting the highest level of initiation in the Eleusinian mysteries. See Plato, *Symposium* 210a1; Plutarch, *De Iside* 77, 382d. Cf. also P. Hadot, "Les divisions des parties de la philosophie dans l'Antiquité", *Museum Helveticum* 36 (1979) 201–223, esp. 218 f.

17 See, for example, *Cant* V (GNO VI 148,20–149,2); *Cant* VII (GNO VI 214,21–216,2); *Cant* XI (GNO VI 318,10–12), where Gregory speaks about the Logos and the Church. I explored Origen's interpretation on both levels of his allegoresis in the article "Fusca sum et formosa. Die Heiligkeit der Kirche und die Heiligkeit der Seele nach den Hohelied-Auslegungen des Origenes", in: Th. Hainthaler—F. Mali—G. Emmenegger (eds), *Heiligkeit und Apostolizität der Kirche. Forscher aus dem Osten und Westen Europas an den Quellen des gemeinsamen Glaubens*, Innsbruck-Wien 2010, 311–334.

18 See, for example, *Cant* I (GNO VI 17,10–18,10); *Cant* XII (GNO VI 349,12); *Cant* III (GNO VI 93,13).

19 *Cant* VI (GNO VI 180,11–15).

20 *Cant* IX (GNO VI 271,11 f.): πέρας γὰρ τῆς ἐναρέτου ζωῆς ἡ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἐστὶν ὁμοίωσις. See also *Cant* I (GNO VI 30,3–5); *Cant* I (GNO VI 29,15 f.); *Cant* IV (GNO VI 129,2–10).

21 *Cant* VI (GNO VI 172,23–173,1): ὅπως χρὴ περὶ τὸ θεῖον ἔχειν τοὺς ἐραστὰς τοῦ ὑπερκειμένου κάλλους.

22 Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 79c ff.; *Respublica* VI,2, 485b–487a; similarly Plotinus, *Enneades* I 6 (1),6,6–16; I 2 (19),3,10–22; 5,1–21.

of *apatheia*,²³ the soul, according to Gregory, should not rid itself of all desire. On the contrary, the triptych of the books of Solomon also incites a certain type of passion, namely a desire (ἐπιθυμία καὶ πόθος) for the unspeakable beauty of wisdom,²⁴ which must be longed for with erotic love (ἐράσθητι αὐτῆς, according to Pr 4.6 [LXX]).²⁵ Rather than complete *apatheia*, Solomon's "philosophy" in the three books therefore intends, according to Gregory, to show the reader how to work with the passions:²⁶ *Proverbs* invoke the desire for wisdom and virtue; *Ecclesiastes* shows the impermanence of visible things; and the *Song of Songs* turns the desire of the soul towards the divine and thus to genuine *adyton*, that is, nuptial union with the bridegroom.²⁷

The strategy of the Scriptures is therefore first to arouse and intensify the bride's desire, and then to turn her in the right direction, that is, from the sensual to the spiritual.²⁸ This "leading" to *apatheia* through the "passionate" images (διὰ τῶν ἐμπαθῶν ῥημάτων) in the *Song of Songs* seems, even to Gregory, paradoxical:²⁹ an erotic relation to the divine needs to be aroused in the soul (for Gregory, ἔρως is an intensified form of ἀγάπη³⁰), and therefore the divine is presented as "beauty"; at the same time, this "passion" (πάθος) needs to be "transformed into *apatheia*".³¹ This passionate *apatheia* can be expressed only by oxymoronic phrases such as Philo's "sober drunkenness" (νηφάλιος μέθη),³²

23 Cf. SVF III 448 (= Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* VII 117); Plotinus, *Enneades* I 2 (19), 3, 20; 5, 7; 6, 25 f. Porphyry, *Sentence* 32, 32.61.105.139 (L. Brisson et al. 336.338.342.344). On Gregory's understanding of *apatheia*, see R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, Oxford—New York 2002, 392 f.; L.F. Mateo-Seco, "Apátheia", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 51–54.

24 *Cant* I (GNO VI 19, 4–8).

25 *Cant* I (GNO VI 21, 7).

26 Gregory oscillates between *apatheia* and *metriopatheia*. See on this, R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, 181–210 (and also 47–54); R. Williams, "Macrina's Deathbed Revisited: Gregory of Nyssa on Mind and Passion", in: L.R. Wickham—C.P. Bammel (eds.), *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity: Essays in Tribute to G.C. Stead*, Leiden 1993, 227–246, esp. 236 f.; J.W. Smith, *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa*, New York 2004, 75–103.

27 *Cant* I (GNO VI 21, 15–23, 1). On the "philosophy of the *Song of Songs*", which "incites the desire for the contemplation of transcendent goods" (εἰς ἐπιθυμίαν ἄγει τῆς τῶν ὑπερκειμένων ἀγαθῶν θεωρίας), see also *Cant* V (GNO VI 137, 5 f.).

28 *Cant* I (GNO VI 24, 12–25, 1).

29 *Cant* I (GNO VI 29, 3–6).

30 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 383, 9): ἐπιτεταμένη γὰρ ἀγάπη ὁ ἔρως λέγεται.

31 *Cant* I (GNO VI 27, 11 f.): μετενεγκοῦσαν εἰς ἀπάθειαν τὸ πάθος. On divine beauty that arouses in the soul increasing desire, cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 32, 6–8).

32 *Cant* V (GNO VI 156, 17–20); *Cant* XII (GNO VI 362, 12); see also *Cant* X (GNO VI 308, 12–18) on

or by the words of the bride, "I sleep but my heart is awake".³³ Or we can surely speak of two impulses (δρμή), spiritual and "material", between which the soul decides by its own choice (ἡ αὐτεξούσιος ἡμῶν δύνάμις τε καὶ προαίρεσις); the life of one means the death of the other.³⁴

Although spiritual beauty cannot be perceived through the senses, according to Gregory's interpretation of Solomon's "philosophy", there are also spiritual (literally "more divine") senses which correspond to the bodily senses³⁵ (as every human being is from the very beginning of its existence a set of "twins" with both bodily and spiritual components³⁶). Gregory therefore presupposes not only incorporeal sight and hearing but also taste, touch and smell in the sense of a kind of "spiritual receptivity of the soul" directed towards spiritual things³⁷ (he substantiates this idea, which has its equivalent in Origen³⁸ and Plotinus,³⁹ through biblical metaphors which come from the realm of these senses). It is necessary, on the other hand, to fortify and thus neutralise the bodily senses by self-control (ἐγκρατεία)⁴⁰ if this spiritual sensitivity is to express itself: the one who turns to see the truth and the divine manifests a kind of blindness towards everything else (as Plato already knew).⁴¹

At the same time, however, this *apatheia* towards sensual things means an increasing love of spiritual beauty⁴² since the desire itself is increased every time the desired is attained.⁴³ If human nature, which is inherently dynamic, stiffens at some aim, then it would, as "stiff frozen", turn into what it beholds,

Ct 5.1. See Philo, *Ebr* 148, and elsewhere (cf. H. Lewy, *Sobria ebrietas: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik*, Giessen 1929, 3–34; on Gregory, *ibidem*, 133–135).

33 *Cant* X (GNO VI 311,8–313,16). Cf. Ct 5.2.

34 *Cant* XII (GNO VI 345,11–346,8). In his interpretation of the *Song of Songs*, Origen too talks about two types of love, corporal and spiritual (cf. Origen, *Commentarium In Canticum*, prol. 2,16–19, [SC 375, 102–104]). Similarly Pausanias in Plato's *Symposium* 185b7–c1.

35 *Cant* I (GNO VI 34,2f.): διπλὴ τις ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῖν ἡ αἴσθησις, ἡ μὲν σωματικὴ ἡ δὲ θειοτέρα.

36 *Cant* VII (GNO VI 240,21–241,4).

37 *Cant* I (GNO VI 34,5–18).

38 Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I 48 (Koetschau 98,9–22); VII 34 (Koetschau 184,23–185,16); *Princ* I 1,9 (Koetschau 27,1–14); Origen, *Commentarium In Canticum*, I 4,19 (Baehrens 105,28–32); II 9,12–14 (Baehrens 167,25–168,5). See on this K. Rahner, "Le début d'une doctrine des cinq sens spirituels chez Origène", *RAM* 13 (1932) 113–145, esp. 114–123. A comparison between Gregory and Origen is made by J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, 238–264.

39 Cf. Plotinus, *Enneades* VI 7(38),6–7.

40 *Cant* VI (GNO VI 195,18–196,8).

41 *Cant* VIII (GNO VI 257,13–258,16). Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus* 174a–b.

42 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 135,2–6).

43 Cf. for example *Cant* I (GNO VI 31,5–32,8); *Cant* XII (GNO VI 369,14–370,11). Similarly, Origen states that a soul will never fulfil the measure of the love which God, who knows no measure, deserves. Cf. Origen, *Commentarium In Canticum*, III,10,7–9 (SC 376, 592–594).

likening itself to an unchangeable idol,⁴⁴ turned to the evil. For anything we can grasp and arrive at is much less than that on which our hope, open to infinity (τὸ ἀόριστον), is focused.⁴⁵

The desire of the “bride soul” never comes to full satisfaction because she always lacks more knowledge of her bridegroom than she possesses, she knows significantly less about the infinite divinity than that which escapes knowing.⁴⁶ Logos “touches the door” of the bride at night, in other words, truth, which eludes our knowing, knocks at the door of our mind only in assumptions and riddles and says: “Open!”⁴⁷

Gregory’s paradoxical strategy how to work with passions shows not only biblical but also Platonic inspiration. The image of the soul as a bride who removes all that is unnecessary and beautifies herself for nuptial union with the bridegroom has its pre-image not only in Origen but also in Plotinus.⁴⁸ On the other hand, Plato knew very well that desire, or love (ἔρως), is a power that lifts the soul to beauty,⁴⁹ but that it is necessary to gradually turn this desire towards the beauty of the soul, and to the beauty itself, as explained to Socrates by the priestess Diotima of Mantinea in the dialogue *Symposium*.⁵⁰ Beauty is the only idea that possesses the strength to attract the soul, as Socrates assures

44 *Cant* V (GNO VI 147,6–14) on Ct 2.11; cf. also Ps 113,16 (LXX). On likening to the animal nature if that nature prevails in man, see also *Cant* VIII (GNO VI 251,1–7).

45 *Cant* VIII (GNO VI 247,14–18); *Cant* V (GNO VI 160,1–6).

46 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 321,2 f.): τὸ μήπω κατελιγμένον ἀπειροπλάσιον τοῦ καταληφθέντος ἐστί. Here Gregory also refers to 1 Cor 8.2.

47 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 324,15–19). Cf. Ct 5.2.

48 Cf. Plotinus, *Enneades* VI 7 (38), 34,6–16: “But one must not have evil, or any other good either, ready to hand, that the soul alone may receive it alone (μόνη μόνον). But when the soul has good fortune with it, and it comes to it, or rather, being there already, appears, when that soul turns away from the things that are there, and has prepared by making itself as beautiful as possible (ἐκνεύσῃ τῶν παρόντων καὶ παρασκευάσασα αὐτὴν ὥς ὅτι μάλιστα καλὴν) and has come to likeness (εἰς ὁμοιότητα)—the preparation and the adornment (ἡ δὲ παρασκευὴ καὶ ἡ κόσμησις) are clearly understood, I think, by those who are preparing themselves—and it sees it in itself suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) appearing—for there is nothing between, nor are there still two but both are one (μεταξὺ γὰρ οὐδὲν οὐδ’ ἐστὶ δύο, ἀλλ’ ἐν ἁμῶν); nor could you still make a distinction while it is present; lovers and their beloveds here below imitate this in their will to be united”. Tr. A.H. Armstrong, Plotinus, *Ennead* VI,6–9, Cambridge (Ma)—London 1988, 191–193.

49 Plato, *Phaedrus* 238c (*eros* as desire directed towards the beauty of bodies in Socrates’ first speech); 249e (*eros*, the love of beauty, as a type of divine madness); on *eros* turning towards beauty see also, for example, 252a; 254b; *Symposium* 201a; 203c; 204b. Diotima, however, clarifies that *Eros* does not desire beauty itself but the engendering or begetting in the beautiful. Cf. *Symposium* 206e.

50 Plato, *Symposium* 210a–211c.

Phaedrus in his “palinode”.⁵¹ The degree to which it is necessary to work cautiously with erotic desire in order to be able to direct it towards the true goal (and the degree to which such an undertaking involves risk) is foreshadowed, in the conclusion of the *Symposium*, by the speech of the drunk Alcibiades.⁵²

The idea of constant growth in good and in knowledge, never reaching the goal, for which Gregory became especially well-known, is built upon foundations of Platonic provenance. In his dialogue *Phaedrus*, Plato works with the idea of the soul as self-moving (αὐτοκίνητος), but different readings of this text also suggest a variation, that is, of the soul as being in “perpetual motion” (ἀεικίνητος).⁵³ In the dialogue *Symposium*, Plato states that man, although always called the same (ὁ αὐτὸς καλεῖται), is, in reality, continually being rejuvenated (changed or moved) both in his body and in his soul, and even in his knowledge (οὐδέποτε οἱ αὐτοὶ ἔσμεν οὐδὲ κατὰ τὰς ἐπιστήμας).⁵⁴ In the same dialogue, Diotima explains to Socrates the nature of love, which always loses whatever it gains.⁵⁵

The motif of becoming likened to infinite divinity by the endless motion of the soul, so important for Gregory, can be found in Plotinus rather than in Plato (unless we see its pre-image in the constant circular motion by which time imitates eternity in the dialogue *Timaeus*).⁵⁶ Plotinus is also familiar with the idea of infinite love which relates to infinity, that is, in this case, to the One.⁵⁷

As we will see, Gregory’s metaphor of the soul as a mirror, so crucial in his “philosophical” project, also owes much to both Plato and Plotinus, although the three authors use the motif in different ways.

51 *Phaedrus* 250b–d.

52 *Symposium* 215a–222b.

53 *Phaedrus* 245c5. On the ambiguity of the manuscript see L. Brisson, *Platon, Phèdre, suivi de La pharmacie de Platon de J. Derrida*, Paris 1989, 208 f. and 165.

54 *Symposium* 207d5–208a3.

55 *Symposium* 203e3–4: τὸ δὲ πορίζμενον αἰεὶ ὑπεκρεῖ.

56 Cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 37d5–7; 38a7–8; 38b8–c3.

57 Plotinus, *Enneades* VI 7 (38), 32,26–29: Οὐ γὰρ ὠρισται ἐνταῦθα ὁ ἔρως, ὅτι μὴδὲ τὸ ἐρώμενον, ἀλλ’ ἀπειρος ἂν εἴη ὁ τοῦτου ἔρως, ὥστε καὶ τὸ κάλλος αὐτοῦ ἄλλον τρόπον καὶ κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος. Pierre Hadot interprets this as meaning ‘finding which is constant seeking’. See P. Hadot, introduction to *Plotin, Traité 50 (III 5)*, Paris 1990, 81.

2 The Platonic Mirror

At the beginning of the history of the philosophical and religious metaphor of the mirror⁵⁸ is probably the orphic legend about little Dionysus, deceived by a child's mirror laid as a trap, who because of his carelessness was ripped apart and eaten by Titans.⁵⁹ From the ashes of these haughty beings, people were to be created who would carry within them, in addition to this titanic vestige, a tiny particle of Dionysus watching his own image.⁶⁰

A mirror, however, does not always or only represent the human ability of self-knowledge⁶¹ or the danger of being absorbed by a mere illusion.⁶² In Plato's *Phaedrus* we read about a mirror which the lover becomes for the beloved.⁶³ What is reflected here, therefore, is the beauty of the beloved, returned to him through a loving glance,⁶⁴ or the ἔρωσ of the lover, which arouses ἀντέρως (reciprocated love) in the beloved.⁶⁵ The Platonic dialogue *Greater Alcibiades* (maybe not by Plato) also works with the idea of a mirror, but as a reflection of the eye in the eye of the other, and of the soul in the soul of another—more accurately of the divine part of the soul in the divine part of another soul, just as the pupil of an eye can see itself in the pupil of the other.⁶⁶ What is in all likelihood a later insertion into this dialogue states that the divine part of the soul comes

58 On the metaphor of a mirror in various religious contexts, see P. Demiéville, "Le miroir spirituel", in: Id., *Choix d'études bouddhiques (1929–1970)*, Leiden 1973, 131–156 (an article from 1948); S. Weiss, "The Motif of Self-Contemplation in Water or in a Mirror in the Enneads and Related Creation Myths", *Chôra* 5 (2007) 79–96. On the history of the mirror in its technical and magical use, see J. Baltrušaitis, *Le Miroir: Essai sur une légende scientifique: révélations, science-fiction et fallacies*, Paris 1978.

59 Cf. Firmicus Maternus, *De erroribus* 6,1–5 (Turcan 88–90).

60 On the gradual crystalization of this legend, see W.K.C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion: A study of the Orphic Movement*, Princeton 1993², 107–126. On its philosophical use, see J. Pépin, "Plotin et le miroir de Dionysos (*Enn.* IV 3 [27],12,1–2)", *Revue internationale de philosophie* 24 (1970) 304–320; S. Weiss, "The Motif of Self-Contemplation", 81–84. An allegorical and anthropological interpretation is offered by Plutarch, *De esu carnum* 996c.

61 Seneca, *Naturales quaestiones* I 17,4: *Inventa sunt specula, ut homo ipse se nosset, multa ex hoc consecuturus, primum sui notitiam, deinde ad quaedam consilium*. Further evidence is offered by N. Hugedé, *La métaphore du miroir dans les Épîtres de saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, Neuchâtel—Paris 1957, 101–113.

62 On the mirror as a production of mere reflections, especially in the Platonic tradition, see N. Hugedé, *La métaphore*, 115–136.

63 *Phaedrus* 255d5–6: ὥσπερ δὲ ἐν κατόπτρῳ ἐν τῷ ἐρῶντι ἑαυτὸν ὁρῶν.

64 *Phaedrus* 255c–d.

65 *Phaedrus* 255d8–e1: εἰδῶλον ἔρωτος ἀντέρωτα ἔχων. On this passage see Ch.L. Griswold, *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*, New Haven—London 1986, 123–128.

66 *Alcibiades* I 132d–133c.

to know itself even better in “that most beautiful mirror” (ἐκείνῳ καλλίστῳ ἐνόπτρῳ) which is God himself, rather than the divine part of another soul.⁶⁷ In any case, the motif of the mirror is used here in ways other than in Gregory. It is not a matter of the reflection of various objects in the mirror, but of the mirror for the soul by which the soul comes to know itself. Similarly, we read in the apocryphal *Odes of Solomon* (13,1): “Behold! The Lord is our mirror. Open your eyes and see them in him”.⁶⁸

Plato has little understanding of the idea of self-knowledge as the pure reflexivity of the soul, at least as far as we can judge from the dialogue *Charmides*.⁶⁹ Plato’s soul does not recognise real beings in itself so it cannot in that sense be called a mirror, and “care” of the soul has, in a version of Plato’s Socrates, a somewhat different meaning: a soul governing the realm of the corporeal is to turn to things themselves, that is, to ideas, so that it is not confused by the changeability of the corporeal realm or led astray from its rational governance.⁷⁰ The individual soul in Plato’s *Timaeus* can help itself by focusing on the more perfect achievements of the world soul, especially by observing the stars and the constancy of their paths.⁷¹

As very well known, Plato developed his ontology upon the relation of the image to its model, and so upon different levels of reflection in mediums of varying degrees of clarity, as in the parable of the divided line, which does not, however, mention a mirror but rather shadows and reflections in water and on smooth surfaces.⁷² It is Plotinus who speaks explicitly of a “mirror” in this sense.

67 *Alcibiades* I 133c13–14. These are the lines preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea (*Praeparatio Evangelica*, XI 27,5, Mras 59,15) and Stobaeus (II 21,24, ed. O. Hense, *Anthologium* 111, Berlin 1894, 576,8–9) that are often regarded as a later, perhaps neo-Platonic or Christian addition (this latter opinion is held by S. Fortuna, “Per un’origine cristiana di Platone, Alcibiade I, 133c8–17”, *Koinonia* 16 (1992) 119–136, who also summarizes the discussion).

68 R. Harris—A. Mingana (eds.), *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, (Syrian text, English translation and commentary), II, Manchester 1920, 276.

69 *Charmides* 165c–175d.

70 *Phaedrus* 246b–248b.

71 *Timaeus* 47a–c.

72 *Respublica* 509e1–510a3: τὸ μὲν ἕτερον τμήμα εἰκόνες—λέγω δὲ τὰς εἰκόνας πρῶτον μὲν τὰς σκιὰς, ἔπειτα τὰ ἐν τοῖς ὕδασι φαντάσματα καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὅσα πυκνὰ τε καὶ λεῖα καὶ φανὰ συνέστηκεν, καὶ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον. On the mirror, see also *Respublica* 402b5–6; 596d8–e3. Also, *Timaeus* 33b7 speaks about the smooth (λεῖον) surface of the created world—since according to the neo-platonic exegesis, the enlightments from the Intellect and the soul are to be reflected there (cf. Proclus, *In Timaeum* 163e–164a, ed. E. Diehl I 179f.).

3 The Mirror in Plotinus

According to Plotinus' *Ennead* III 6, material things are merely games or phantoms, as though they were mirror images of things which exist elsewhere.⁷³ If we remove real beings reflected in matter, nothing will remain—not even the mirror itself (as matter which lacks any form is nothing).⁷⁴ Reflections would surely not exist without this mirror of matter; things themselves, however—that is, their intelligible models—are not in any way dependent on it.⁷⁵

In *Ennead* IV 3, Plotinus uses the metaphor of a mirror for a different kind of relationship illustrated on Plato's divided line, and that is for the content of intellection (νόημα) unrolled through discursive thinking (λόγος) into the faculty of imagination as a kind of reflection in a mirror.⁷⁶ In *Ennead* I 4, the activity of the Intellect and thought is reflected in the self-awareness (ἀντίληψις) of the soul as in a mirror without being dependent on this mirror.⁷⁷

We can therefore see that the mirror of ideas or the content of the divine Intellect is on the one hand matter, and on the other the soul in its faculty of imagination and its (somewhat empirical) self-awareness (which is Plotinus' ἀντίληψις).⁷⁸

Even though according to Plotinus the soul itself is also an image of the Intellect,⁷⁹ it is not called its “mirror” (we will return to this interesting point and

73 Plotinus, *Enneades* III 6 (26), 7,23–26: ὅθεν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐγγίγνεσθαι δοκοῦντα παίγνια, εἰδῶλα ἐν εἰδῶλι ἀτεχνῶς, ὡς ἐν κατόπτρῳ τὸ ἀλλαχοῦ ἰδρυμένον ἀλλαχοῦ φανταζόμενον. Similarly, *ibidem*, 7,41; 13,35. On Plotinus' use of the metaphor of the mirror, see J.H. Sleeman—G. Pollet (eds.), *Lexicon Plotinianum*, Leiden-Leuven 1980, 550; J. Pépin, “Plotin et le miroir de Dionysos”, 315–320; S. Weiss, “The Motif of Self-Contemplation”.

74 *Enneades* III 6 (26), 13,38–40. According to Plotinus, precisely because we can see a mirror, we don't attribute real existence to the images in it. If, however, the mirror itself was invisible, we would be more easily deceived. Things reflected in matter are, however, just as non-existent as the reflections in mirrors, it is only that the “mirror” here remains invisible. Cf. *Enneades* III 6 (26), 13,43–55.

75 *Enneades* III 6 (26), 14,1–4. According to Plotinus, mirrors are not affected by whatever is reflected in them. Neither is matter, which is even less exposed to the influence of that which is depicted in it than are mirrors. See *Enneades* III 6 (26), 9,16–19.

76 *Enneades* IV 3 (27), 30,9 f.: ὁ δὲ λόγος ἀναπτύσσας καὶ ἐπάγων ἐκ τοῦ νοήματος εἰς τὸ φανταστικὸν ἔδειξε τὸ νόημα οἷον ἐν κατόπτρῳ.

77 *Enneades* I 4 (46), 10,6–16.

78 On the term ἀντίληψις, which denotes intellectual as well as sensual “apprehension”, see H.-R. Schwyzler, “‘Bewusst’ und ‘Unbewusst’ bei Plotin”, in: *Les sources de Plotin (Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique)*, v, Genève 1960, 341–378, esp. 367; E.W. Warren, “Consciousness in Plotinus”, *Phronesis* 9 (1964) 83–97, esp. 83–89; Id., “Imagination in Plotinus”, *The Classical Quarterly*, NS 16 (1966) 277–285.

79 For example, *Enneades* V 3 (49), 8,53 f. and other places, see *Lexicon Plotinianum*, 302.

also to the difference between the two metaphors). Rather, the soul sets a mirror up to itself and does so multiply.

According to *Ennead* VI 2, the activity of the soul turned “upwards” to the Intellect is reflected in the activity of the soul leading “downwards” to matter. Through this comparison, Plotinus asserts that the soul does not enter into matter but is only reflected there.⁸⁰ In the various forms of its particular faculties, the soul therefore manifests itself in the body while remaining, itself, without change, just as a single face is reflected in many mirrors.⁸¹ The soul which operates in a body is therefore totally dependent on its actual existence without the body.⁸²

Plotinus also uses the metaphor of a mirror in *Ennead* IV 3 in an exposition on nature (the lower part of the world soul) which created everything as a likeness of *logoi* which it contains within itself.⁸³ Human souls can therefore find in the creations of nature what for them is a kind of homogenous “mirror of Dionysus” (οἶον Διονύσου ἐν κατόπτρῳ) in which their own image is reflected. Lured by this, they descend into bodies—without, however, losing their anchoring in the Intellect.⁸⁴ The reflection of the individual soul in its activity towards the body is a kind of reply to the formation of the λόγοι in matter, laid down by the world soul or nature in such a way as to attract the individual souls to an interest in the bodies. An individual soul turning to the body is thus captivated by its own image in this medium, which, through a kind of trickery on the part of the world soul, is present here before the individual soul develops a whole range of its reflections.

Plotinus nevertheless differentiates between the creation of an image (ἡ τῆς εἰκόνος ποιήσις) and a reflection in a mirror, although both are certainly renderings of a form in a heterogeneous medium. According to his explanation, a mirror image (just like a shadow or a reflection on water) represents complete dependence on the model, without which such a reflection cannot exist and which does not in fact, in itself, have any existence. In this way “weaker potencies relate to the stronger ones” (as we have just seen in a soul). On the contrary, an image, in the sense of a portrait, is not completely dependent on the presence of the model it imitates, but on the activity of the artist with the help of a

80 *Enneades* VI 2 (43), 22, 33–35: “Ἡ καὶ τὸ κάτω λεγόμενον αὐτῆς Ἰνδαλμὰ ἐστὶν αὐτῆς, οὐκ ἀποτεμνημένον δέ, ἀλλ’ ὡς τὰ ἐν τοῖς κατόπτροις, ἕως ἄν τὸ ἀρχέτυπον παρῇ ἕξω.

81 *Enneades* I 1 (53), 8, 17 f.: μένουσα μὲν αὐτῇ, εἰδωλὰ δὲ αὐτῆς διδοῦσα, ὥσπερ πρόσωπον ἐν πολλοῖς κατόπτροις.

82 *Enneades* IV 5 (29), 7, 44–51.

83 *Enneades* IV 3 (27), 11, 6–11.

84 *Enneades* IV 3 (27), 12, 1–4.

certain constellation of colours (even in the case of a self-portrait).⁸⁵ There is a slightly nuanced difference in meaning, therefore, between “image” and “mirror”: between the complete dependence of a reflection on the reflected object and the mere derivative relation by which an image relates to its object. In both cases, however, what is reflected is always the higher or ontologically more primal reality in the medium that is lower and secondary. The lower cannot be reflected in the higher, neither, according to Plotinus, can it have an effect on it.

What is interesting is that Plotinus, in spite of using the metaphor of an image,⁸⁶ does not use that of a mirror for either of the most fundamental relations of his universe, namely the dependence of the Intellect on the One and of the soul on the Intellect. One reason for this may be the difference we have just mentioned between an image and a mirror, as the Intellect and soul (and only them) are, for Plotinus, real beings, “hypostases”, rather than mere shadows of things which exist elsewhere.

But there may be other reasons. According to Plotinus’ statement, there is a sense in which the One “gives what it itself does not have”, that is, being and form which it itself is not.⁸⁷ Only on the level of the Intellect does that which is present in the One as “the power of all things”, exist in unrolled form.⁸⁸ The metaphor of a mirror is perhaps not suitable for this relationship of unrolling something which lacks form.

In terms of the soul’s relationship to the Intellect, the soul, in its true essence, is a kind of permanent part of the Intellect rather than its reflection “elsewhere”. Therefore, it is not what Plotinus understands to be a mere reflection in a mirror.

Furthermore, mirroring is connected with visualization, that is, with the projection onto a sensual medium or at least upon the screen of the imagination or of empirical self-awareness, as we have seen in all of the examples of this metaphor in Plotinus’ work. For this reason the metaphor of the mirror is not suitable for either the Intellect or the soul, but mainly for the presence of forms in matter or the operation of a soul in a body.

The relationship between God, the intellect and the soul is not described in terms of seeing or of reflections in a mirror (ἐνοπτρίζεσθαι) probably until Por-

85 *Ennead* VI 4 (22), 10, 5–17.

86 See e.g. *Ennead* V 1(10), 3, 7; 7, 1.

87 On the question of how the One gives what it itself does not have and itself is not, see *Ennead* VI 9 (9), 6, 54–57; VI 7 (38), 15, 19 f.; 17, 3–18; V 3 (49), 15, 1–3. Cf. C. D’Ancona Costa, “Ἀμορφον καὶ ἀνείδεον. Causalité des formes et causalité de l’Un chez Plotin”, *Revue de philosophie ancienne* 10 (1992) 69–113, esp. 104–113.

88 On the One as δύναμις πάντων, see *Ennead* V 4 (7), 1, 36; 2, 38; V 3 (49), 15, 31–35. Cf. G. Aubry, “Puissance et principe: La δύναμις πάντων, ou puissance de tout”, in: D. Montet (ed.), *Plotin, Ἐκεῖ, ἐνταῦθα (Là-bas, ici)*, Toulouse 1999 (= *Kairos* 15 [2000]) 9–32.

phyry, who did so in his exposition intended for Marcella: “Let therefore [thy] intellect follow God and by likening itself unto him see him as in a mirror. Let the soul follow the intellect”.⁸⁹

We cannot exclude the possibility that Gregory read this exhortation of Porphyry’s to his wife.⁹⁰ In all events Gregory does use the expression ἐνοπριζόμενος (“seeing in a mirror”) twice in his Homilies on the *Song of Songs* and one of the passages (in *Homily 3*) comes very close to Porphyry,⁹¹ while surprisingly, the equivalent phrase in the apostle Paul about a Christian seeing God’s glory in a mirror (κατοπριζόμενοι) of the human image (2 Cor 3.18)⁹² Gregory does not mention even once.⁹³

89 Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 13,11 f.: ἐπέσθω τοίνυν ὁ μὲν νοῦς τῷ θεῷ, ἐνοπριζόμενος τῇ ὁμοιώσει θεόν. τῷ δὲ νῷ ἡ ψυχὴ. On this text, reading θεόν, rather than (the probably erroneous) θεοῦ, see P. Corssen, “Paulus und Porphyrios (Zur Erklärung von 2 Cor 3,18)”, *ZNW* 19 (1920) 2–10, esp. 3 f.; S. Fortuna, “Per un’origine cristiana”, 127 f. Both authors also explore the meaning of the verb ἐνοπριζεσθαι in its medio-passive form: instead of “to be seen as in a mirror” they suggest “to mirror” (cf. P. Corssen, “Paulus und Porphyrios”, 4 f.; S. Fortuna, “Per un’origine cristiana”, 128–130). However, “to mirror” is usually taken as the meaning of the active form ἐνοπριζώ, while the medium is usually understood in the sense of “to see (oneself) in the mirror” (cf. H.G. Liddell—R. Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon*, Oxford 1968, 571 with respect to our place; G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford 1961, 478).

90 So surmises Kerstin Bjerre-Aspegren, who especially points out, however, the difference in thought between the two authors. Cf. K. Bjerre-Aspegren, *Bräutigam, Sonne und Mutter: Studien zu einigen Gottesmetaphern bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Lund (Malmö) 1977, 145–148.

91 *Cant* III (GNO VI 98,12); on the two occurrences of the expression ἐνοπριζομαι in Gregory, see *Lexicon Gregorianum* III 255. In *Cant* III (GNO VI 98,5–12) it is possible to find more parallels with Porphyry’s text *Ad Marcellam* 13,1–12, without, however, its being a literal citation. Porphyry describes here, apart from following God through following the intellect, the purification necessary for the soul to see God as in a mirror (ἐνοπριζεσθαι, line 2), until “through the truth his pure beauty and lifegiving light will shine” (κάλλος γὰρ ἐκείνου τὸ ἀκήρατον καὶ φῶς τὸ ζωτικὸν ἀληθεία διαλάμπων, line 3 f.). Similarly, Gregory, taking up *Ct* 1.14, states in *Cant* III (GNO VI 98,5–12): “When a person becomes by his acts the same as he (the bridegroom) is, then when he looks at the fruits of his own conscience he will see the bridegroom himself there, as thanks to the bright and pure life he will see, as in a mirror (ἐνοπριζόμενος), the light of truth” (ὅταν τις διὰ τῶν ἔργων ταῦτα γένηται, ἃ ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν, οὗτος τὸν τῆς ἰδίας συνειδήσεως βότρυν βλέπων αὐτὸν τὸν νυμφίον ἐν τούτῳ βλέπει τῇ φωτεινῇ τε καὶ ἀκηλιδώτῳ ζωῇ τὸ φῶς τῆς ἀληθείας ἐνοπριζόμενος).

92 Cf. 2 Cor 3.18: ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένω προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος. Also, for the medio-passive form, κατοπριζόμενοι, besides the usual translation “seeing (in a mirror)”, the translation “reflecting (like a mirror)” is suggested. Cf. P. Corssen, “Paulus und Porphyrios”, 4 f.; J. Dupont, “Le chrétien, miroir de la gloire divine d’après 2 Cor 3.18”, *RB* 46 (1949) 392–411, esp. 392–398. It is impossible, however, to show this meaning elsewhere and the context does not necessarily require it. See N. Hugedé, *La métaphore*, 18–33.

93 We can hear an echo of 2 Cor 3.18 in, for example, *Cant* V (GNO VI 160,2 f.); *Cant* VI (GNO VI 186,8 f.); *Cant* VIII (GNO VI 253,16 f.). Gregory, however, especially liked to cite the idea of

4 Soul as a Mirror in Gregory's Homilies

The term κάτοπτρον is being used eleven times in Gregory's Homilies on the *Song of Songs*; the word ἔσοπτρον (a contraction of εἴσοπτρον) occurs twice.⁹⁴ With this second term the Septuagint praises God's wisdom as "the unspotted mirror of the power of God"⁹⁵ and also the apostle Paul describes the necessarily partial nature of all knowledge of God in this life.⁹⁶ Gregory refers to this last verse from *First Corinthians* in the prologue to his homilies in order to explain that from a mere "mirror and a riddle" (ἔσοπτρον καὶ αἰνίγμα), which is a literal understanding of the text, it is necessary to turn to its spiritual content.⁹⁷ This does not, however, mean that knowledge of God will ever lose its incomplete character. Because of its infinity, the divine is impossible to describe; all terms concerning it are mere conjectures, created on the basis of seeing "in a mirror and through a riddle" (δι' ἐσόπτρου καὶ δι' αἰνίγματος).⁹⁸

In his seventh homily, Gregory uses the metaphor of a mirror when explaining a theory of sight:

Images of all that which is seen fall onto the clear part of the pupil and thus complete the act of seeing. Thanks to the eye, therefore, into which the form of the seen impresses itself as in the mirror (κατόπτρου δίκην), each necessarily receives the form of that which he looks upon.⁹⁹

According to this interpretation, images (εἰκόνες) of objects fall on the pupil, in other words their form (εἶδος or μορφή) imprints itself on the eye, as in Aristotle.¹⁰⁰ As with the Platonic *Alcibiades*, Gregory does indeed speak about the pupil of the eye as a mirror, but one in which what is reflected is not the pupil of the other but anything to which it is turned at that moment. Gregory mentions

the advance "from glory to glory". On the only occurrence of the term κατοπτρίζομενος in Gregory, see *Lexicon Gregorianum* v 302.

94 On these expressions in Gregory's work, see *Lexicon Gregorianum* III 525; v 302f.

95 Wis 7.26: ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνεργείας.

96 1 Cor 13.12: βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι. Cf. N. Hugedé, *La métaphore*.

97 *Cant*, prol. (GNO VI 6,8–10).

98 *Cant* III (GNO VI 86,15–18): οὐ γὰρ αὐτὸ δείκνυσιν ἐκείνου τὸ εἶδος, ὃ οὔτε τις εἶδεν οὔτε ἰδεῖν δύναται, ἀλλὰ δι' ἐσόπτρου καὶ δι' αἰνίγματος ἔμφασιν τινα σκιαγραφεῖ τοῦ ζητουμένου ἐκ τινος εἰκασμοῦ ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἐγγινόμενῃν.

99 *Cant* VII (GNO VI 218,17–219,1): ἐπειδὴ γὰρ πάντων τῶν ὁρατῶν αἱ εἰκόνες τῷ καθαρῷ τῆς κόρης ἐμπίπτουσαι τὴν ὁρατικὴν ἐνέργειαν ἀποτελοῦσιν, ἀνάγκη πᾶσα πρὸς ὃ τις ὁρᾷ, τοῦτου τὴν μορφὴν ἀναλαμβάνειν διὰ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ κατόπτρου δίκην τοῦ ὁρατοῦ τὸ εἶδος ἀναμασσόμενον.

100 Cf. Aristotle, *De anima* 434a, 18f.: αἴσθησις ἐστὶ τὸ δεκτικὸν τῶν αἰσθητῶν εἰδῶν ἄνευ τῆς ὕλης.

a similar theory of sight in his fourth homily in which he refers to “experts in physiology”:

In clear pupils of the eye, it is possible to see the faces of those gazing into them. As those able to provide a physiological explanation of these matters say, an eye sees by receiving the images which fall into it (τὰς τῶν εἰδῶλων ἐμπτώσεις) emanated (ἀπορρέουσιν) from visible objects.¹⁰¹

Which “experts in physiology” Gregory consulted we can only speculate.¹⁰² We have already heard about the reflection of a pupil in the pupil of an eye in the Platonic *Alcibiades*. The process itself of seeing, however, is explained in Plato’s *Timaeus* somewhat differently as the coalescing of the inner fire emanating from an eye together with the external light into a homogenous beam that transfers the motion of the objects it collided with into the very soul.¹⁰³ Timaeus goes on to explain that unlike a flat mirror, which shows what is on the right on the left, a concave cylindrical mirror (if its raised edges are left and right) reflects a beam of light coming from the left to the right and vice-versa, that is, it corresponds to direct vision.¹⁰⁴ From this, it can perhaps be implied, although Plato does not do so directly, that the glossy part of the eye functions like a cylindrical mirror.

The idea of “images” (εἰδῶλα) emanating from objects—an idea which Gregory drew from his physiologists—is not, however, mentioned here. It seems to have been added (in a slightly inorganic way) to Gregory’s previous description, which recalls the Platonic *Alcibiades* or the Aristotelian imprint of a form of

101 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 105,10–14): ἐπειδὴ ταῖς καθαραῖς τῶν ὀμμάτων κόραις ἐνορᾶται τῶν ἐνατε-
νιζόντων τὰ πρόσωπα (φασὶ γὰρ οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα φυσιολογεῖν ἐπιστήμονες ὅτι τὰς τῶν εἰδῶλων
ἐμπτώσεις δεχόμενος, αἱ τῶν ὀρατῶν ἀπορρέουσιν, οὕτως ἐνεργεῖ τὴν ὁψιν ὁ ὀφθαλμός) [...]. It
is not completely clear how “the images which fall into the eye” (τῶν εἰδῶλων ἐμπτώσεις)
emanate from visible objects (αἱ substitutes for ἐμπτώσεις); it is probably an inaccurate
paraphrase. On the phrase τῶν εἰδῶλων ἐμπτώσεις, see below, note 106.

102 B. Wyss (“Doxographie”, *RAC* 4 (1957) 197–210, esp. 208) believes that the Cappadocians
knew the doxographical work of Ps-Plutarch *Placita philosophorum*, where this theory is
also presented (cf. below, note 105). H. Langerbeck (GNO VI 104 f. ad loc.) assumes that the
source of Gregory’s exposition is Theophrastus’ treatise *De sensu* 52–53 (ed. G.M. Stratton,
Theophrastus and the Greek Physiological Psychology before Aristotle, London-New York
1917, 110–112), which offers a refutation of Democritus’ theory. F. Dünzl (FC 16/1, 254 f.,
note 10 ad loc.) also recalls Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In De sensu* 2 (CAG 3/1, 24,14–22),
whose interpretation of this theory is indeed closer to Gregory’s. See below, note 106.

103 *Timaeus* 45b–d.

104 *Timaeus* 46a–c. For more on this, see F.M. Cornford, *Plato’s Cosmology: The Timaeus of
Plato*, Indianapolis—Cambridge 1935 (reprinted 1997), 151–156.

that which is seen onto the eye, as we have already noted. It is usually ascribed to the atomists or to Empedocles and was a normal part of a doxographical explanation about sight (and also of the exposition on the mirror, which usually followed).¹⁰⁵ It was probably from such texts that Gregory knew it (his description is terminologically close to the expositions on the atomist theory by Alexander of Aphrodisias).¹⁰⁶

Whatever the case may be, this physiological explanation also provides a kind of key to Gregory's theological use of the metaphor of the mirror. For Gregory, the determining motif is not so much the reflection of a higher ontological level in a less defined and less unified lower level (as it is in Plotinus), but the idea of a mirror in which what is reflected is always that to which it is turned (just as an object that is looked at is reflected in the pupil of the eye). As he puts it in his fourth homily:

Human nature (τὸ ἀνθρώπινον) is truly like a mirror which takes on different appearances according to that which, based on its own choice (τῶν προαιρέσεων), is displayed in it. If it looks upon gold, gold appears there and by way of reflection it gives off the lustre of this material. If anything abominable is reflected in the mirror, it also becomes alike its ugliness and then looks like a frog, a toad, a centipede, or anything repulsive—whatever is placed before it (εὐρεθῇ ἀντιπρόσωπον).¹⁰⁷

105 Ps. Plutarch, *Placita Philosophorum* IV 13, 901a8–b5; IV 14, 901c10–13; Aetius in: *Doxographi Graeci* 403,2–4.14–21; 405,10–15; Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In De sensu* (CAG 3/1, 24,14–22; 56,12–16). Plotinus too, in his exposition on the theories of sight, mentions without further qualification the “champions of the images” (οἱ δὲ τῶν εἰδώλων προστάται) which are believed to transit through emptiness. See Plotinus, *Enneades* IV 5 (29),2,12 f.

106 Like Gregory (see above, notes 99 and 101), Alexander speaks of “the form of the seen that is received and imprinted” on the eye (τὸ εἶδος τοῦ ὁρωμένου ἀναλαμβάνον καὶ ἀναμασόμενον), cf. *De anima mantissa*, CAG, suppl. 2/1, 137,1. In his critique of the atomists he also speaks about “images that emanate from the seen objects and fall into the eye” (εἰδῶλα γὰρ τινα ὁμοιόμορφα ἀπὸ τῶν ὁρωμένων συνεχῶς ἀπορρέοντα καὶ ἐμπίπτοντα τῇ ὀψει τοῦ ὁρᾶν ἡτιῶντο), *In De sensu* (CAG 3/1, 56,12 f.; see also 24,14–22; 146,23 f.; *De an. mant.* CAG, suppl. 2/1, 134,28–136,28). On the “images which fall into the eye” (εἰδώλων ἐμπτώσεις, or ἔμπτωσις), apart from Alexander (*De anima mantissa*, CAG, suppl. 2/1, 134,28; 135,8.23; 136,17; *In De sensu*, CAG 3/1, 60,4–7; 146,23), see also Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* IX 7,44 (ed. R.D. Hicks). Ps. Plutarch (*Placita Philosophorum* IV 13, 901a8) and Aetius (*Doxographi Graeci* 403,3), on the other hand, speak in the same respect about εἰδώλων εἰσκρίσεις, or εἰσκρισις.

107 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 104,2–10): κατόπτρῳ γὰρ ἔοικεν ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ ἀνθρώπινον κατὰ τὰς τῶν προαιρέσεων ἐμφάσεις μεταμορφούμενον· εἴ τε γὰρ πρὸς χρυσὸν ἴδῃ, χρυσὸς φαίνεται καὶ τὰς αὐτῆς αὐγάς τῆς ὕλης διὰ τῆς ἐμφάσεως δείκνυσιν, εἴ τέ τι τῶν εἰδεχθῶν ἐμφανείη, καὶ τούτου τὸ αἶσχος δι' ὁμοιώσεως ἀπομάσσεται· βάτραχόν τινα ἢ φρῦνον ἢ σκολόπενδραν ἢ ἄλλο τι τῶν ἀήδων θεα-

The reflection of divine beauty is therefore, according to Gregory, dependent on the very choice of the soul. It becomes beautiful if it turns towards archetypal beauty, just as it reflects a repulsive thing if it turns towards it. “By approaching the archetypal beauty, you have become beautiful. Just like a mirror you have taken on my appearance”, as we have heard the divine bridegroom to say to his bride.¹⁰⁸ According to Ct 5.12, the bride “washed her eyes in milk” in order, at least Gregory believes, to prevent vain and transient things from being reflected in them. According to Gregory’s observation in his fifth homily (and as Plutarch knew),¹⁰⁹ milk is the only liquid in which objects are not reflected, which is why the image appropriately portrays the fact that only “that which truly is” (τὸ ὄντως ὄν) is reflected in the eyes of the bride.¹¹⁰ Only in this way can she become beautiful:

How can one behold a beautiful sight in a mirror unless the mirror has reflected the image of a beautiful form? Neither did the mirror which is human nature become beautiful until it drew near to the beautiful and was formed by the image of divine beauty.¹¹¹

According to these quotations, the mirror of divine beauty is “human nature” (τὸ ἀνθρώπινον or ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις), but elsewhere it is the soul (to which, according to Gregory, the truly human is reduced).¹¹² The soul is a kind of “living mirror endowed with free choice” as we already know. If the beauty of its bride-

μάτων τῷ οἰκείῳ εἶδει ὑποκρινόμενον, ᾧ περ ἂν τούτων εὐρεθῇ ἀντιπρόσωπον. See also *Cant* v (GNO VI 150,10–18).

108 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 103,18–104,2). Cited above, note 1.

109 Cf. Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales* 696a6: τὸ γάλα τῶν ὑγρῶν μόνον οὐκ ἔσποτρίζει.

110 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 396,12–397,1): “All that is of liquid nature is, like a mirror, by its smooth surface tailored for reflecting the appearance of those who gaze into it. Only milk does not produce images in this way. Hence the most perfect praise of the eyes of the (bride) church is that nothing insubstantial, erroneous or vain which is contrary to the truth of beings is falsely reflected in them; rather they gaze at that which truly is and do not accept erroneous apparitions and fantasies of this life.” (πάντα γὰρ ὅσα τῆς ὑγρᾶς ἐστὶ φύσεως καθ’ ὁμοιότητα τῶν κατόπτρων διὰ τοῦ λείου τῆς ἐπιφανείας τῶν εἰς αὐτὰ βλεπόντων ἀντιφαινέσθαι παρασκευάζεται τὰ ὁμοιώματα, ἐν μόνῳ δὲ τῷ γάλακτι ἡ τοιαύτη εἰδωλοποιῖα χώραν οὐκ ἔχει. οὐδ’ ἅρτιν τοιοῦτος τῶν τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὀφθαλμῶν ἐστὶν ὁ τελεώτατος ἔπαινος τὸ μηδὲν ἀνυπόστατον τε καὶ πεπλανημένον καὶ μάταιον παρὰ τὴν τῶν ὄντων ἀλήθειαν σκιαγραφεῖν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς δι’ ἀπάτης ἀλλὰ τὸ ὄντως ὄν βλέπειν, τὰς δὲ ἡπατημένας τοῦ τῆδε βίου ὕψεις τε καὶ φαντασίας μὴ παραδέχεσθαι).

111 *Cant* V (GNO VI 150,9–13): πῶς γὰρ ἐστὶ δυνατόν καλὴν ὕψιν ἐν κατόπτρῳ γενέσθαι μὴ καλῆς τινος μορφῆς δεξαμένην τὴν ἔμφασιν; οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως κάτοπτρον οὐ πρότερον ἐγένετο καλόν, ἀλλ’ ὅτε τῷ καλῷ ἐπλησίασε καὶ τῇ εἰκόνι τοῦ θεοῦ κάλλους ἐνεμορφώθη.

112 *Cant* II (GNO VI 64,2f.); *Cant* IX (GNO VI 276,16–277,2). Cf. *Alcibiades* I 127e–131a.

groom or “brother” is to be reflected in it, it must first be gazing directly into his face, and secondly it must purify the surface of its mirror (this procedure had fundamental significance for the metallic mirrors used in antiquity):

A mirror—granted that it is prepared with skill and according to need—displays in itself, on its clear surface, the exact image of a face that appears in it. In just this way, the soul, if it has prepared itself according to need and rejected every material stain, has imprinted upon itself the clear image of pure beauty. This living mirror endowed with free will (τὸ προαιρετικόν τε καὶ ἔμψυχον κάτοπτρον) therefore says, “Since I look straight into my brother’s face, the whole beauty of his form is reflected in me”.¹¹³

This gaze “directly” (ὄλω τῷ κύκλῳ) into the face of the bridegroom from the fifteenth homily, recalling—although from the inverse perspective—“the most beautiful mirror” in the Platonic *Alcibiades*, is, however, relativized by Gregory’s (also Platonic) statement that it is impossible to look directly into the sun, only at its reflection.¹¹⁴ Neither, Gregory believes, is it possible to look straight at the sun of “God the Logos”, but only into “our mirror”:

[Man] does not possess a nature that would be able to look steadily into the God Logos as into the sun-disk; rather he looks at the sun in himself as in a mirror. The rays of that true and divine virtue shine forth from his purified life by the riddance of passions, which emanates from them, and make the invisible visible to us and the inaccessible comprehensible by displaying the sun in the mirror that we are.¹¹⁵

113 *Cant* XV (GNO VI 440,1–10): καὶ οἷον ἐπὶ τοῦ κατόπτρου γίνεται, ὅταν τεχνικῶς τε καὶ καταλλήλως τῇ χρειᾷ κατεσκευασμένον ἐν καθαρχῇ τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ δι’ ἀκριβείας ἐν ἑαυτῷ δείξῃ τοῦ ἐμφανέντος προσώπου τὸν χαρακτήρα, οὕτως ἑαυτὴν ἢ ψυχὴ προσφόρως τῇ χρειᾷ κατασκευάσασα καὶ πᾶσαν ὑλικὴν ἀπορριψαμένη κηλίδα καθαρὸν τοῦ ἀκηράτου κάλλους ἑαυτῇ τὸ εἶδος ἐνετυπώσατο. λέγει οὖν τὴν φωνὴν ταύτην τὸ προαιρετικόν τε καὶ ἔμψυχον κάτοπτρον ὅτι· ἐπειδὴ ἐγὼ ὄλω τῷ κύκλῳ τὸ τοῦ ἀδελφίδου πρόσωπον βλέπω, διὰ τοῦτο ὅλον τῆς ἐκείνου μορφῆς τὸ κάλλος ἐν ἐμοὶ καθορᾶται.

114 See Plato, *Phaedo* 99d4–e4. In the *Respublica*, the necessity to accustom the eye—unable to look upon the sun—by first looking at shadows and reflections on water, is a metaphor for a testing journey towards the idea of the good. Cf. Plato, *Respublica* 516a6–b7.

115 *Cant* III (GNO VI 90,10–16): πρὸς αὐτὸν μὲν τὸν θεὸν λόγον ὡς πρὸς ἡλίου κύκλον ἀτενῶς ἰδεῖν φύσιν οὐκ ἔχει, ἐν ἑαυτῷ δὲ καθάπερ ἐν κατόπτρῳ βλέπει τὸν ἥλιον· αἱ γὰρ τῆς ἀληθινῆς ἐκείνης καὶ θείας ἀρετῆς ἀκτῖνες τῷ κεκαθαρμένῳ βίῳ διὰ τῆς ἀπορρεούσης αὐτῶν ἀπαθείας ἐλλάμπουσιν ὁρατὸν ποιοῦσιν ἡμῖν τὸ ἀόρατον καὶ ληπτὸν τὸ ἀπρόσιτον τῷ ἡμετέρῳ κατόπτρῳ ἐνζωγραφοῦσαι τὸν ἥλιον.

This “mirror that we are” (“our mirror”), which in its purified surface shows what is in itself impossible to see, is not, however, for Gregory, only the soul but also the church (just as for Plato the enlargement of the soul is the city, although in this magnifying glass Plato sees not divine beauty but justice¹¹⁶). Gregory states:

As those who cannot see the sun-disk itself, but look upon it through its reflection on the water, so also these (angelic spirits) look at the Sun of righteousness as if in the pure mirror of the church and grasp it through its manifestation here.¹¹⁷

Gregory therefore lends to the metaphor of the soul as a mirror a multiplicity of meanings. Although he wove it together from the motifs of Platonic tradition, he nonetheless presents it in a new light.¹¹⁸

- (1) Through this metaphor, Gregory is clearly seeking to express a kind of *ontological dependence*: the bride's beauty does not have its origin in itself, nor is it a work of the soul. Rather, it is a reflection of the beauty of the bridegroom, for which the soul can only make space and purify its mirror so that the bridegroom's beauty is reflected in it.¹¹⁹ This Platonic motif, which points out the dependence of a reflected image on its model, is also paralleled in Plotinus, although Plotinus himself, as we have seen, used it neither for the relation of the Intellect to the One nor of the soul to the Intellect.
- (2) What is also fundamental for Gregory is the continuing *distance* between the mirror and what is reflected, without which this metaphor would lose any kind of sense. It is this very distance through which the divine beauty that is reflected in the soul continually arouses the love of the soul and continually increases the soul's desire without allowing it to rest, as the metaphor of a mirror does not allow for complete penetration or any kind of fusion. According to Gregory, it is impossible to see divine beauty

¹¹⁶ Cf. Plato, *Republica* 368c7–369a3.

¹¹⁷ *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 257,1–5): καθάπερ οἱ αὐτὸν τοῦ ἡλίου τὸν κύκλον ἰδεῖν ἀδυνατοῦντες, διὰ δὲ τῆς τοῦ ὕδατος ἀγῆς εἰς αὐτὸν ὁρῶντες, οὕτω κάκεινοι ὡς ἐν κατόπτρῳ καθαρῷ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἡλίον βλέπουσι τὸν διὰ τοῦ φαινομένου κατανοοῦμενον.

¹¹⁸ Further links in the tradition of the metaphor of a mirror (esp. Philo of Alexandria, Theophilus of Antioch and Gregory Thaumaturgus) are discussed by K. Bjerre-Aspegren, *Bräutigam, Sonne und Mutter*, 129–153. On the Christian reception of *Alcibiades 1*, see also S. Fortuna, “Per un'origine cristiana”, 131–135.

¹¹⁹ *Cant XV* (GNO VI 444,11–445,3).

other than in such a mirror.¹²⁰ This motif of the infinite love of beauty that is continually escaping was also known to Plotinus, who is familiar with the idea of infinite love which relates to infinity.¹²¹ Gregory, however, lays much greater emphasis on it and also interprets the continuing distance in terms of an ontological difference between the created and the uncreated, which is missing in Plotinus.

- (3) A further aspect of the metaphor relates to the incomprehensibility of the divine: God, who is beyond human understanding, can, according to Gregory, become known in the mirror of a soul or of the church, that is, in a medium that *translates divine beauty into a form that is accessible to created beings*. The metaphor of a mirror image hints at the fact that the beauty reflected in the soul belongs to the divine itself (it does not come to existence only by this mirror projection), that is, the divine is not only pure indeterminateness or infinity but also a kind of form. Gregory does not himself deduce this latter implication, whereas for the Platonic authors it is fundamental. In his *Ennead* VI 7 (38), to which Gregory's homilies come very close, Plotinus also notes that the principle of beauty is in itself "formless" (ἄμορφον).¹²² He is at the same time, however, very well aware that this "beauty above all beauty",¹²³ which has no limits, is mediated to the soul through the beauty of the Intellect, that is, by the world of forms.
- (4) Finally, what appears crucial is the possibility of *turning* the mirror, which allows for the reflecting of various models, of which Gregory, wishing to emphasise the choice made by the soul as to which model it decides to reflect, makes extensive use. This is why he is concerned not only about the pure receptivity of the reflecting surface but also about the "living mirror endowed with free choice"¹²⁴ as we have already heard—about a kind of animated mirror which selects its objects of its own accord. Although this motif of the free choice of orientation is not denied even to the neoplatonic soul,¹²⁵ it is not, however, in Plotinus, connected to the metaphor of the mirror nor emphasised as much as in Gregory.

120 *Cant* III (GNO VI 90,12–16): αἱ γὰρ τῆς ἀληθινῆς ἐκείνης καὶ θείας ἀρετῆς ἀκτῖνες τῷ κεκαθαρμένῳ βίῳ διὰ τῆς ἀπορροεύσεως αὐτῶν ἀπαθείας ἐλλάμπουσιν ὁρατὸν ποιοῦσιν ἡμῖν τὸ ἀόρατον καὶ ληπτὸν τὸ ἀπρόσιτον τῷ ἡμετέρῳ κατόπτρῳ ἐνζωγραφοῦσαι τὸν ἥλιον.

121 Plotinus, *Enneades* VI 7 (38),32,26–29 (cited above, note 57).

122 Plotinus, *Enneades* VI 7 (38),33,37f.

123 *Ennead* VI 7 (38),32,29.

124 *Cant* XV (GNO VI 440,7f.).

125 Cf. Plotinus, *Enneades* IV 8 (6),4; VI 9 (9),7,14–18; V 1 (10),1,11–25; 12,12–15; I 2 (19),4,12–16;

In conclusion we can say that Gregory's soul as a mirror of the divine bridegroom, which, furthermore, decides itself what it will reflect, does not have a clear pre-image in any of his Platonic predecessors (although the idea of the soul as a bride and the infinite journey of her love is paralleled in Plotinus).¹²⁶ The core of Gregory's reflections seems to be the motif of seeing the pupil in the pupil of the other—which originated in the Platonic *Alcibiades*—but extended to the reflecting of various objects in the eye that turns to them (connected with the “physiological” theory of images that fall into the eye). Gregory gives to the Alcibiadian metaphor a new emphasis, particular to his thinking, and this is the ability to select the object reflected, which in the case of a mirror is somewhat surprising, but in the case of a mirror-eye seems perfectly understandable.

Where Plotinus is convinced that it is necessary to work on one's own statue until its beauty emerges,¹²⁷ Gregory's basic metaphor of a soul-mirror remains different in spite of similarities. Just as we are, in Gregory's words, “our own fathers,”¹²⁸ we also choose the image that will shine in the mirror of our lives. Whatever we think of this electivity of what we will become (and its metamorphoses in the history of European philosophy until Sartre), we will not find its source in the thinking of antiquity but in the reflections of the early Christian authors.

Bibliography

- Aubry, G. “Puissance et principe: La δύναμις πάντων, ou puissance de tout”, in: D. Montet (ed.), *Plotin, 'Exeî, ἐνταῦθα (Là-bas, ici)*, Toulouse 1999 (= *Kairos* 15 [2000]) 9–32.
- Baltrušaitis, J. *Le Miroir: Essai sur une légende scientifique: révélations, science-fiction et fallacies*, Paris 1978.
- Bjerre-Aspegren, K. *Bräutigam, Sonne und Mutter: Studien zu einigen Gottesmetaphern bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Lund (Malmö) 1977.
- Brisson, L. *Platon, Phèdre, suivi de La pharmacie de Platon de J. Derrida*, Paris 1989.
- Capboscq, A. *Schönheit Gottes und des Menschen: Theologische Untersuchung des Wer-*

Porphry, *Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes* 30,11–19 (Brisson et al. 332); Porphyry, *De abstinence* I 30–31 (Bouffartigue I 64–67).

126 Cf. Plotinus, *Enneades* VI 7 (38), 34,6–16 (cited above, note 48).

127 *Ennead* I 6 (1), 9,7–15.

128 *Eccl* VI (GNO V 380,3–5): ἑαυτῶν γὰρ τρόπον τινὰ πατέρες γινόμεθα, ὅταν διὰ τῆς ἀγαθῆς προαιρέσεως ἑαυτοὺς πλάσωμέν τε καὶ γεννήσωμεν καὶ εἰς φῶς προαγάγωμεν. See also *Vit Moys* II (GNO VII/1 34,11–13).

- kes In Canticum Canticorum von Gregor von Nyssa aus der Perspektive des Schönen und des Guten*, Frankfurt a. M. 2000.
- Cornford, F.M. *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato*, Indianapolis—Cambridge 1935 (reprinted 1997).
- Corssen, P. "Paulus und Porphyrios (Zur Erklärung von 2 Cor 3,18)", *ZNW* 19 (1920) 2–10.
- D'Ancona Costa, C. "Ἀμορφον καὶ ἀνείδεον. Causalité des formes et causalité de l'Un chez Plotin", *Revue de philosophie ancienne* 10 (1992) 69–113.
- Daniélou, J. *Platonisme et théologie mystique: Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1944.
- Daniélou, J. "La Colombe et la Ténèbre", *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 23 (1955) 389–418.
- Demiéville, P. "Le miroir spirituel", in: Id., *Choix d'études bouddhiques (1929–1970)*, Leiden 1973, 131–156.
- Dupont, J. "Le chrétien, miroir de la gloire divine d'après 2 Cor 3,18", *RB* 46 (1949) 392–411.
- Fortuna, S. "Per un'origine cristiana di Platone, Alcibiade I, 133c8–17", *Koinonia* 16 (1992) 119–136.
- Griswold, Ch.L. *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*, New Haven—London 1986.
- Guthrie, W.K.C. *Orpheus and Greek Religion: A study of the Orphic Movement*, Princeton 1993².
- Hadot, P. "Les divisions des parties de la philosophie dans l'Antiquité", *Museum Helveticum* 36 (1979) 201–223.
- Harris, R.—A. Mingana (eds.). *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, (Syrian text, English translation and commentary), II, Manchester 1920.
- Hugedé, N. *La métaphore du miroir dans les Épîtres de saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, Neuchâtel—Paris 1957.
- Karfíková, L. "Fusca sum et formosa. Die Heiligkeit der Kirche und die Heiligkeit der Seele nach den Hohelied-Auslegungen des Origenes", in: Th. Hainthaler—F. Mali—G. Emmenegger (eds), *Heiligkeit und Apostolizität der Kirche. Forscher aus dem Osten und Westen Europas an den Quellen des gemeinsamen Glaubens*, Innsbruck—Wien 2010, 311–334.
- Karfíková, L. "Gregory of Nyssa, Witness of Macrina's Life and Death", *Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis, Theologica Olomucensia*, 14 (2013) 15–26.
- Lewy, H. *Sobria ebrietas: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik*, Giessen 1929.
- Lampe, G.W.H. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford 1961.
- Liddell, H.G.—R. Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon*, Oxford 1968.
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. "Apátheia", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 51–54.
- Pépin, J. "Plotin et le miroir de Dionysos (*Enn.* IV 3 [27], 12, 1–2)", *Revue internationale de philosophie* 24 (1970) 304–320.

- Rahner, K. "Le début d'une doctrine des cinq sens spirituels chez Origène", *RAM* 13 (1932) 113–145.
- Schwyzler, H.-R. "'Bewusst' und 'Unbewusst' bei Plotin", in: *Les sources de Plotin (Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique, v)*, Genève 1960, 341–378.
- Sleeman, J.H.—G. Pollet (eds.). *Lexicon Plotinianum*, Leiden—Leuven 1980.
- Smith, J.W. *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa*, New York 2004.
- Sorabji, R. *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, Oxford—New York 2002.
- Warren, E.W. "Consciousness in Plotinus", *Phronesis* 9 (1964) 83–97.
- Weiss, S. "The Motif of Self-Contemplation in Water or in a Mirror in the Enneads and Related Creation Myths", *Chôra* 5 (2007) 79–96.
- Williams, R. "Macrina's Deathbed Revisited: Gregory of Nyssa on Mind and Passion", in: L.R. Wickham—C.P. Bammel (eds.), *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity: Essays in Tribute to G.C. Stead*, Leiden 1993, 227–246.

The Rhetoric of Landscape in Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the Song of Songs*

Morwenna Ludlow

1 Introduction

In this paper I want to take you on a walk through a garden. It is, to be sure, an imaginary garden; nevertheless, it bears a significance which extends beyond itself. Some of this significance concerns words and texts: for as we shall see, the garden is, amongst other things, a “garden of rhetoric”.¹

The garden in question appears in the Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the Song of Songs*. These *Homilies* are of course very well-known and equally well-studied: Gregory embarks on an exegesis of the Septuagint Greek text of the *Song* using a form of allegorical exegesis which is influenced by Origen of Alexandria's exegesis of the *Song* and which Gregory defends at some length in his Preface to his own *Homilies*.² For obvious reasons, Gregory's *Homilies* have mostly been studied from the perspective of his doctrine of the soul's ascent to God, his apophatic theology and his biblical hermeneutics. I do not propose to go over that literature. Here, instead of pressing ahead to the spiritual interpretation, I would like us to pause and wander through the landscape and garden which is described vividly by the *Song*, but even more lavishly by Gregory of Nyssa himself in *Cant* v.³

Why is this important? The passage on which this paper will focus is of the kind usually ignored by modern scholars: first, because it relates to the “literal” narrative of the *Song* (and is consequently by-passed *en route* to studies of the *Song*'s spiritual meaning); secondly, because it is an example of Gregory's use of rhetoric, which is still often regarded as peripheral to his theology. Studies of Gregory's rhetoric have moved beyond the kind of scholarship which once analysed it—usually dismissively—purely in terms of the “Second Sophistic”.⁴

1 I borrow the phrase from the title of Øivind Andersen, *Im Garten der Rhetorik: die Kunst der Rede in der Antike*, Darmstadt 2001.

2 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, in: H. Langerbeck, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, Vol. VI, Leiden 1986, 3–13. English translation (unless otherwise noted) R.A. Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa, Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta (GA) 2012.

3 *Cant* v (GNO VI 145,14–147,5; tr. Norris 159).

4 See e.g. L. Méridier, *L'Influence de la seconde sophistique sur l'oeuvre de Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris

Nevertheless, I suggest that traces of this habit remain in the tendency to sideline such passages as “mere rhetoric” with no theological import.

Gregory’s description of a pleasant landscape or garden⁵ in *Cant v* is an instance of the rhetoric technique of *ekphrasis*. Early scholarship on Gregory’s rhetoric, noting his fondness for *ekphrasis* explained it as the creation of a miniature work of art that would appeal to a classically-educated audience, but criticised it for producing “un pur morceau de bravoure” lacking connection to its theological context.⁶ More recent assessments of *ekphrasis*, however, have stressed its importance within a literary work as a whole and have articulated its effect on the audience in terms of emotional engagement: the audience should be persuaded by *ekphrasis*, not just mesmerized by its author’s skill. Thus Ruth Webb argues that the defining quality of *ekphrasis* is *enargeia* or “the vividness that makes absent things seem present by its appeal to the imagination”.⁷ *Ekphrasis* had the effect of involving the audience emotionally, by stimulating their imaginative empathy with the observers of the scene in the narrative:

ekphrasis and *enargeia* underline the emotive and communicative aspects of rhetorical discourse and the way in which it involves the action of one mind upon another. In particular, these rhetorical uses of *ekphrasis* demanded an active engagement from the listener who was prompted by the speaker’s words to supply details.⁸

I will seek to understand how the *ekphrasis* in *Cant v* was intended to have emotional and persuasive—and thus *theological*—effect. In order to do this, I will ask how descriptions of pleasant landscapes functioned in classical literature (part II) and elsewhere in Gregory’s writing (part III). My argument is that

1906, 20, 47, 280. Méridier separates the content of Gregory’s writing from its form which, he alleges, bears the mark of “la technique des sophistes” (97); the combination is “un produit bizarre et déformé”, a “union mal assortie”, producing “dissonances choquantes” (280). Cf. Aubineau’s comments, in: M. Aubineau, *Gregory of Nyssa, Traité de La Virginité*, Paris 1971: Gregory is enslaved to the rules of rhetoric (89–94) while being a “great artist” who can “seduce” his reader (91 and 93). A more subtle approach can be found in M. Cassin, *L’écriture de la controverse chez Grégoire de Nysse: polémique littéraire et exégèse dans le Contre Eunome*, Paris 2012.

5 The two merge, for reasons which will be clarified below, cf. p. 291.

6 L. Méridier, *L’Influence de la seconde sophistique*, 139–140, 143–144; quote from 141, repeated 143 in relation to a passage from *Cant v* (GNO VI 151,12–152,7; tr. Norris 165).

7 R. Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*, Farnham and Burlington (VT) 2009, 193.

8 R. Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 193.

Gregory anticipated that his readers would supply precisely such well-known descriptions as “details” in response to his very carefully-worded prompts. Furthermore, an understanding of such literature helps us to understand what kind of emotional reaction Gregory might hope that the audience would share with the observer of the scene in the narrative of the *Song*—that is, the woman awaiting her lover (part IV). Finally, in my conclusions, I will draw together my reflections on the audience’s active engagement with Gregory’s text, on Christology and on early Christian responses to Greek literary styles.

2 Landscapes and Gardens in the Ancient Imagination: Mood, Character and Rhetoric

Gardens tell us something about their creators. Gardening, argues one garden historian, “has little to do with the history of art or the development of aesthetic theories ... It is all about social aspirations, lifestyles, money and class”.⁹ We can, therefore, “read” a garden like a text—as the anthropologist Kate Fox has done so amusingly in her book *Watching the English*. “The English all want to live in their own private box with their own private green bit [...] Our moats and drawbridges may be imaginary, but every Englishman’s castle has its miniature ‘grounds’”.¹⁰ But precisely because gardens can be *read* in this way, what is *said* and *written* about them takes on significance: these words reveal not only something about the values, aspirations and emotions of the gardener but also of the observer. Thus, according to Fox, a lower-class garden might well be treasured by its owner for being “colourful”, “cheerful” and “neat” and “tidy”, but condemned by others for being “garish” and “regimented”.¹¹

As Richard Jenkyns points out so eloquently in his book *Virgil’s Experience*, the ancients’ attitude to landscape revealed much about *their* social values:

Whereas the landscape garden, which most Englishmen and even some others believe to be the highest form of garden art yet devised, affects to mimic the spontaneity and asymmetry of uncultivated nature, the ancient garden tames and regularizes it. Typically, it is symmetrical and enclosed and it is useful for growing fruits and vegetables.¹²

9 C. Quest-Ritson, *The English Garden: A Social History*, London 2001, cited in K. Fox, *Watching the English*, London 2004, 130.

10 *Ibidem*, 124–125.

11 *Ibidem*, 131–132.

12 R. Jenkyns, *Virgil’s Experience: Nature and History: Times, Names and Places*, Oxford 1998, 23.

Gardens therefore represent nature tamed—and even when classical authors write about a pleasant landscape it still has many garden-like features. In Jenkyns' words, the authors describe "mild and gentle scenes: cultivated ground, tilth and vineyard; or a mixture of spring, meadow and shady grove".¹³ Conversely, a hostile landscape is full of high mountains, snow-capped peaks and torrents hurling themselves towards the sea. Ancient depictions of ideal landscape emerge from a social reality in which agriculture was precarious, life in the countryside was threatened by dangers from weather, beasts and bandits—and life in cities was increasingly crowded.

The ancients, then, shared an assumption that a pleasant landscape was fertile, tended and moderately populated—and ancient writers drew on this shared assumption in various ways. Firstly, they use landscape to evoke mood. Descriptions of wild mountains evoke a sense of fear or awe, because only a god can dwell there.¹⁴ Descriptions of milder landscapes, however, evoke pleasure and a pride in civilisation and the value of hard work; in love-lyric they evoke the awakening or satisfaction of desire. Pleasant landscapes are above all *attractive*: they draw to them both humans and gods. Thus, for example, the *Homeric Hymns* recount how Persephone was lured to the entrance of Hades while she was "picking flowers across the soft meadow, roses and saffron and lovely violets, iris and hyacinth, and narcissus"; even Pan is "drawn to the gentle streams" and at night is attracted back to "a dark spring" and "a soft meadow where crocus and fragrant hyacinth spring up inextricably mingled with the grass".¹⁵ Indeed, Sappho uses precisely this idea of attractive landscape to call Aphrodite to her:

Come goddess, to your holy shrine,
 where your delightful apple grove
 awaits, and altars smoke with frankincense.
 A cool brook sounds through apple boughs,
 and all's with roses overhung;
 from shimmering leaves a trancelike sleep takes hold.
 Here's a flowery meadow, too,
 where horses graze, and gentle blow the breezes ...
 Here, then, Love-goddess much in mind,

13 *Ibidem*, 23.

14 See for example, Homer, *Hymni Homerici* 19 (To Pan), 6–14 (ed. M.L. West, *Homeric hymns, Homeric apocrypha, lives of Homer*, Cambridge [Ma] 2003, 198–199).

15 See Homer, *Hymni Homerici* 2 (To Demeter): lines 6–8, in: West (ed.), 32–33. *Homeric Hymn* 19—*To Pan*: lines 9, 20, 25–26, in: West (ed.), 198–201.

infuse our feast in gracious style
with nectar poured in cups that turn to gold.¹⁶

Richard Jenkyns comments on the way in which one finds in this poem, perhaps for the first time in Greek literature, “the sentiment of place; that is, the combination of personal emotion or experience with the description or evocation of the individual character of a scene. This poem conveys both a mood and a picture, both subjectivity and objectivity, as Sappho conveys how she feels, being in a particular place at a particular time”.¹⁷ The poem expresses “an enhanced feeling for nature coming into association with the divine”.¹⁸ Sappho’s mood of joyful expectation is appropriate because when a god enters a landscape she or he *transforms* it: in the *Iliad*, for example, the sea rejoices when Poseidon drives in his chariot over the waves; the earth blossoms with extravagant and out of season flowers under the coupling of Zeus and Hera.¹⁹ But, crucially, *in the context of the poems*, the natural phenomena are real. They are not metaphors or similes external to the narrative: rather, the landscape and its flowers are integral parts of the narrative, albeit parts described in a particular way to heighten a specific mood. In Sappho’s poem, “Aphrodite exists and the grove exists, as in the fourteenth book of the *Iliad* Zeus and Hera and the flowers exist”.²⁰

Secondly, classical poets used descriptions of landscape to heighten or emphasise a sense of someone’s character. For example, Alcinous’ garden which is beautifully described in *Odyssey* VII is orderly, enclosed, and extraordinarily fruitful, with pears, pomegranates, apples and figs, olives and vines. It thus fits and heightens our sense of who Alcinous is: “the rich king of an orderly society”.²¹ Even though the fertility of his garden is magical, it is so because of the gods’ favour.²² Significantly, of the two springs in Alcinous’ garden one provides irrigation for the whole garden, the other water for the local settlement. These springs remind us of Alcinous’ responsibility both for his own family and for the wider community—but they are not *mere* symbols. In the context of the poem they are real rivers. Jenkyns argues that the places where Circe, Calypso

16 M.L. West, *Greek Lyric Poetry: The Poems and Fragments of the Greek Iambic, Elegiac, and Melic Poets*, Oxford 1993, 36–37.

17 R. Jenkyns, *Virgil’s Experience*, 34.

18 *Ibidem*, 35.

19 Homer, *Iliad*, 13:26–29 (ed. A.T. Murray—W.-F. Wyatt, *Homer, Iliad*, Cambridge [Ma] 1999). See R. Jenkyns, *Virgil’s Experience*, 27, 55.

20 *Ibidem*, 36.

21 *Ibidem*, 27.

22 Homer, *Odyssey*, VII 132 “such were the glorious gifts of the gods at the dwelling of Alcinous” (ed. A.T. Murray—J. Henderson, *Homer, Odyssey*, Cambridge [Ma] 2002).

and Nausicaa live all have a similar kind of significance in the *Odyssey*: their locations are not allegories of character; rather, the fact that Nausicaa lives in a gentle meadow landscape and Calypso in a remote, wild yet fertile island says something about the women they are.²³ There is a strong sense of fit between character and context.

This was taken further in Roman Republican and early Augustan literature in which farming (albeit of a fairly gentle kind), was deemed an appropriate activity for the wise man²⁴ and a garden was the location for philosophical debate, as opposed to the idle chatter of city dinner-parties.²⁵ Conversely, one finds condemnation of excessive gardens which were intended for display rather than the production of food or philosophical contemplation. Horace, for example, condemns vast estates with huge fish-ponds and gardens given over to ornamental trees and perfumed flowers, replacing land previously sustaining wheat, olive trees or oak.²⁶ In such writing, then, landscapes, especially farms or gardens, are endowed with a moral significance which reflects back on their owners. Indeed, so effective was this association of an ordered and productive garden with Roman Republican rectitude, that it became part of the modern narrative about the rise and decline of Rome.

Just as a garden mirrors the character of its owner, so the gardens of a nation reflect the character and the degree of advancement of the State. It is no coincidence that the popular garden of the Roman Republic was the simple kitchen garden, while under the Empire pretentious landscape gardens were the vogue. The vitalizing energy of the Republic found an outlet in the productive vegetable plot: the elaborate but sterile gardens of the Empire were symbolic of incipient decay.²⁷

Thirdly, the increasingly elaborate descriptions of tended landscapes led writers to use such descriptions as a space in which to ponder the art of writing itself. The reason for this is obvious: the composition of texts, like gardening, is a combination of nature and nurture. Too much artifice and the effect will seem ostentatious or plain ugly; too little and it will be wild, disorgan-

23 Jenkyns, *Virgil's Experience*, 29–30.

24 The classic example is Cicero, *De senectate* 15–17 [51–60], as noted by R.J. Penella, *The Private Orations of Themistius*, Berkeley 2000, 56 (n. 11).

25 Horace, *Satires* II 6,70–76: which prompts the famous story of the town and the country mouse.

26 Horace, *Odes* II 15 in: Horace, tr. C.E. Bennett, *The Odes and Epodes*, London 1988, 146–147.

27 J. Lawson, "The Roman Garden", *Greece and Rome*, 19–57 (1950), 97.

ised and unfruitful. An excellent example of this rhetorical theme appears in Themistius' funeral oration in honour of his father.²⁸ To begin with, agriculture appears in this oration merely as a suitable activity for a philosopher: "my father praised agriculture highly and loved it. He declared that in agriculture one could find the only kind of rest that is suitable for a philosopher—the kind that comes after hard work".²⁹ Next Themistius artfully uses a reference to the *Odyssey* to comment on the perfect fit between his father's "cultivated and fruitful garden" and "his soul which was well-ordered and not full of rustic crudeness (ἀγροικίας)".³⁰ Finally, he draws a connection between gardening and rhetoric:

Nor could you have made any comparison of even a brief remark or admonition of his to the fruit that grew without interruption for Alcinous or to the golden apples of the Hesperides; for my father's intention was not to achieve beauty alone in his words. He said that those who, in working the soil, plant only groves of lush plane trees and cypresses and have no interest in wheat and grapevines aim more at enjoyment than at nourishment. He used to compare such tree-planters to those who, in their discourse, are in search only of pleasure and of how to charm their audience, but neither know how, nor even try, to speak of the things from which the soul derives nourishment and by which it is bettered. Such men, he would say, are not yet philosophers any more than those tree-planters are farmers. They are flatterers, fawners and cooks, instead of physicians; they are beautifiers instead of athletic trainers.³¹

This is highly artful writing: Themistius begins with a reference to Homer and concludes with Plato's famous contrast between the sophist and the philosopher in *Gorgias*.³² This is a theme of which he was particularly fond: philosophy and rhetoric need each other, for philosophy without rhetoric is mute, while rhetoric without philosophy has nothing worth-while to say.³³ The well-ordered, carefully-irrigated and fecund garden is thus doubly-appropriate to Themistius' father: like Alcinous' garden it fits his inner *character* (his soul), but in addition to this it also reflects the way in which that character was habit-

28 Themistius, *Oration* 20 (tr. Penella 51–60); page numbers of the Petavius-Harduinus edition in square brackets.

29 *Ibidem* [236] (tr. Penella 55).

30 *Ibidem* [237] (tr. Penella 56).

31 *Ibidem* [237] (tr. Penella 56–57).

32 Plato, *Gorgias* 462b–466a.

33 For the best example of this theme, see Themistius, *Oration* 26 (tr. Penella 140–163).

ually *expressed*—that is, through his words. This passage also reveals that for all his love of order and culture, Themistius' father had a strong sense that you could have too much artifice in a garden. In his case—as we saw with Horace—excessive artifice was connected with a failure to be productive: “lush plane trees and cypresses” as opposed to “wheat and grapevines”.³⁴

Finally, the description of a pleasant landscape was connected with the art of words in a slightly different way through the influence of Plato's *Phaedrus*. This dialogue takes place as Socrates and Phaedrus walk outside (but not far from) the city walls along the Ilissus, which “looks pretty and pure and clear and fit for girls to play by” (indeed, Phaedrus suggests he and Plato paddle in it as they walk). They seek a place, under a tall plane tree, where there is “shade [...] a moderate breeze and grass to sit [...] or to lie down on” in the heat of the day.³⁵ When they get there, Socrates surprises his companion with an *ekphrasis* in praise of the spot:

By Hera, it is a charming resting place. For this plane tree is very spreading and lofty, and the tall and shady willow is very beautiful, and it is in full bloom, so as to make the place most fragrant; then, too, the spring is very pretty as it flows under the plane tree, and its water is very cool, to judge by my foot. And it seems to be a sacred place of some nymphs and of Achelous, judging by the figurines and statues. Then again, if you please, how lovely and perfectly charming the breeziness of the place is! and it resounds with the shrill summer music of the chorus of cicadas. But the most delightful thing of all is the grass, as it grows on the gentle slope, thick enough to be just right when you lay your head on it.³⁶

It is in this place that the two men discuss love and rhetoric; it is in this dialogue that, even as he critiques existing rhetoric, Socrates seems to make space for a “truly rhetorical and persuasive art”.³⁷ Indeed, he seems to exemplify both kinds himself, in his first (bad) and his second (good) speech about love. Notably one of the things which distinguishes the latter is its apparently divine inspiration,³⁸ although Socrates is careful to emphasise that good rhetoric (as opposed

34 Themistius, *Oration* 20 [237] (tr. Penella 56), as quoted above.

35 Plato, *Phaedrus* 229a–b, 242b (ed. H.N. Fowler, *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, Cambridge [Ma] 1990, 418–420, 458–459).

36 Plato, *Phaedrus* 230b–c (tr. Fowler 422–433).

37 See especially *Phaedrus* 269a–e and 271d–272b; quote 269d (τὴν τοῦ τῷ ὄντι ῥητορικοῦ τε καὶ πιθανοῦ τέχνην) (tr. Fowler 544–547).

38 *Phaedrus* 245a–245c; 257a–b.

to the techniques which are simply the preliminaries to rhetoric) requires the knowledge of truth, specifically of nature (φύσις) and of different kinds of souls, so as to aid persuasion.³⁹ Famously, a further distinction is made in the closing pages of the dialogue between the written and the spoken word.⁴⁰ Socrates expresses this contrast in terms of a gardener sowing seeds:

Would a sensible husbandman, who has seeds which he cares for and which he wishes to bear fruit, plant them with serious purpose in the heat of summer in some garden (κήπους) of Adonis, and delight in seeing them appear in beauty in eight days, or would he do that sort of thing, when he did it at all, only in play and for amusement? Would he not, when he was in earnest, follow the rules of husbandry, plant his seeds in fitting ground, and be pleased when those which he had sowed reached their perfection in the eighth month?⁴¹

The swiftly-growing “garden of letters” (τοὺς μὲν ἐν γράμμασι κήπους) does not bear *bad* fruit: the product is a better occupation in old age than banquets and gives pleasure and amusement. But the one who thus “sows his words with a pen” lacks the *seriousness* of the one who “plants and sows in a fitting soul intelligent words which are able to help themselves and him who planted them, which are not fruitless, but yield seed from which there spring up in other minds other words capable of continuing the process for ever, and which make their possessor happy, to the farthest possible limit of human happiness”.⁴² Here, then, Plato uses both a gentle landscape (which is repeatedly associated with love, nymphs, gods and inspiration) and the analogy of a garden to critique the arts of words. It is more than likely that Themistius is drawing on this tradition as well as the others I have discussed above, in his own articulation of a good, philosophical, rhetoric.

39 *Phaedrus* 271d–272b.

40 *Phaedrus* 275c–276a. While one might assume that the spoken word is rhetoric, here it is more closely associated with dialectic. This move has caused much scholarly debate about Plato’s own attitude to rhetoric, but my assumption here is that dialectic is one of the foundations of good rhetoric.

41 *Phaedrus* 276b (tr. Fowler 566–567).

42 *Phaedrus* 276c–277b (tr. Fowler 566–571).

3 Gardens, Landscapes and Gregory of Nyssa

What has this all got to do with Gregory's reception of the *Song*? Firstly, most analyses still lack a sense of what it might have been like *for Gregory* to read it. It is all too easy for us to read the *Song of Songs* either through the lens of a long western tradition of spiritual interpretation or with modern historical-critical techniques designed to illuminate the Song's original genre and composition. I suggest that when Gregory read the *Song* its poetic subjects would have been very familiar to him from his own literary traditions: shepherds, spring flowers, gentle birdsong, vines and vineyards, figs and other fruits are all ingredients of the classic mild and pleasant landscape. The *Song* contains direct references to all the key ingredients of this kind of setting: flocks of sheep and a shepherd (1.7; 2.16), sustenance (milk, wine and honey: 5.1) and a variety of spice-bearing plants (5.1; 6.2; 4.6). The action takes place close to a city (3.2; 5.7) and several houses are mentioned (1.4; 1.1; 2.4; 2.9; 3.4; 5.2–6). This is emphatically not a wilderness. Furthermore, aspects of the bride are described in terms of doves (1.15; 4.1) flowers (2.1–2), apples (2.3), pomegranates (4.3; 6.7), even a flock of goats (!) (4.1; 6.5) or sheep (4.2; 6.6). The lover has eyes like doves, cheeks as bowls of spices, lips as lilies (5.12–13). The role of the garden in particular is emphasised, for not only does it appear to be the place where the couple meet, but it is the “proper” place for the lover: “My beloved has gone down to his garden (εἰς κήπον αὐτοῦ) [...] to graze among the gardens (ἐν κήποις) and to gather lilies” (6.2; cf. 4.16–5.1). Finally and famously the bride is described as an enclosed garden (κήπος κεκλεισμένος: 4.12), a fountain in a garden (πηγή: 4.12,15) and a “garden/a paradise of pomegranates” (παράδεισος ῥόδων: 4.13). For modern readers, these images may recall Origen, Gregory, and perhaps Bernard. For Gregory, they were likely to recall Homer, Sappho and Theocritus.

The rest of this paper will set out an explanation of why this matters and what Gregory's reading has to do with rhetoric. Focussing on his *ekphrasis* of a spring landscape in *Cant v*, I will ask why Gregory *dwells* on the description of the landscape and garden, commenting on its physical features and even expanding the description himself. Why, if he thinks that the truth of the *Song* lies in its spiritual meaning, does he spend so much time writing about gardens?

Before I examine this passage, however, I want briefly to offer some evidence to corroborate my claim that Gregory's writing about gardens referred back to the classical traditions outlined above. An excellent example is Gregory's *Epist xx* to Adelphius, which refers explicitly to *Odyssey vii*'s description of the gardens of King Alcinous.⁴³ Like Alcinous' garden, Adelphius' is well-ordered,

43 “Then lying around the buildings are the Phaeacian gardens (κήποι)—but let not the beau-

beautiful and fecund. It may not bear magical fruit through the supernatural intervention of the gods, but it does contain peaches grown through the crafty mixing of different strains.⁴⁴ Gregory self-consciously draws attention to the way in which the garden is nature tamed by art (τεχνή): ironically, the ordered planting is so artistic it is impossible for the art of words to describe.⁴⁵ Even the fish in the ponds are tame beyond all expectation.⁴⁶ Just as Alcinous' garden heightens our sense of him as "the rich king of an orderly society", so Gregory's words flatteringly reflect Adelphius' wealth and his good-management of his estate; Gregory is perhaps also implicitly comparing the physical beauty and order to the virtues of Adelphius' inner life.⁴⁷

But we may also note some tension: if "nature" is "tyrannized by art" (τυραννηθείσα παρὰ τῆς τέχνης ἢ φύσις) is there a somewhat tasteless excess in this garden? This might particularly seem to be the case in the light of a tirade against luxurious gardens in the third of Gregory's *Homilies on Ecclesiastes*. It is true that this attack is set within a spiritual interpretation—"what need of many gardens (παραδείσων πολλῶν) has he who looks towards the one garden (τὸν ἓνα παράδεισον)? What use have I for a plot (κῆπου) that grows vegetables, the food of the weak in health?"⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Gregory seems also to be denouncing actual luxurious gardens of the kind that he might well have visited or heard of himself. He criticises luxury (ἡ τρυφή) that goes beyond necessity (τῇ χρείᾳ)⁴⁹ and which finds expression in plants that have been cultivated to grow unnaturally: for example, evergreen trees which become a roof, or plants which grow out of season.⁵⁰ Gregory's "exhibit A" of unnatural extravagance is "all the types of fruit which are artificially produced (lit. which "force nature" τὴν φύσιν βιάζεται) by crossing different species with each other, giving an ambiguous impression in appearance and taste, so as to seem to be both kinds when they are a

ties of Vanota be insulted by comparison with those. Homer never saw "the apple with shining fruit" (τὴν μηλέαν τὴν ἀγλαόκαρπον) that we have seen here [...]: *Epist* xx 9–10 (GNO VIII/2 70; ed. P. Maraval, Paris 1990, 264, 48–51; ed. A. Silvas, Leiden 2007, 185); cf. Homer, *Odyssey* vii 115; μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι (tr. Murray and Henderson 255).

44 *Epist* xx 11 (GNO VIII/2 70–71; tr. Silvas 185–186).

45 *Epist* xx 12 (GNO VIII/2 71; tr. Silvas 186).

46 *Epist* xx 15 (GNO VIII/2 71; SC363 266,82–84; tr. Silvas 186).

47 R. Jenkyns, *Virgil's Experience*, 27, as quoted above.

48 *Eccl* III (GNO V 331,14–16; ed. S.G. Hall [ed.], *Gregory of Nyssa, Homilies on Ecclesiastes: An English Version with Supporting Studies: Proceedings of the Seventh International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa* [St. Andrews, 5–10 September 1990], Berlin—New York 1993, 69, translation slightly adapted).

49 *Eccl* III (GNO V 331,22; tr. Hall 69).

50 *Eccl* III (GNO V 332,4–17; tr. Hall 70).

mixture of two different ones”.⁵¹ Art here is guilty of distorting nature, exceeding plain need, under the influence of “undisciplined desire” (ἡ ἀπαιδαγωγώγῃτος ἐπιθυμία).⁵²

From these and other passages in Gregory’s writings, I think we can draw the following conclusions: first, that he sometimes draws self-consciously on other classic descriptions of gardens in his own writing; secondly, it is likely that he is using a description of a garden in *Epist* xx to heighten our sense of Adelphius’ status and character (without in any way suggesting that what he is describing is not “real”); thirdly, he is able to use the nature-artifice relationship to create a sense of wonder (*Epist* xx) and to condemn the kind of artifice that arises from the unbridled desire for luxury (*Eccl* III), and finally, although he does not *explicitly* use these passages as places in which to reflect on the art of writing, he does in *Epist* xx artfully and rather disingenuously contrast the art of the gardener with his own claimed lack of verbal skill—that is, he is *implicitly* using a description of a garden to encourage the reader to think about *how* as well as *what* Gregory is writing.

4 Homilies on the Song of Songs v⁵³

Let us turn to Gregory’s fifth *Homily on the Song of Songs*—specifically to his exegesis of Ct 2.10–13 (LXX):

- 8 The voice of my kinsman:
Behold, he comes leaping over the mountains,
bounding over the hills ...
10 My kinsman answers and says to me,
Rise up, come, my close one, my fair one, my dove.
11 For behold, the winter is past,
the rain is gone; it has departed.
12 The flowers are seen on the earth;
the time for cutting has come,
the voice of the dove is heard in our land.

51 *Eccl* III (GNO V 332,14–17; tr. Hall 70). See also line 18 ἡ τέχνη βιασαμένη τὴν φύσιν (“art distorting nature”) (tr. Hall 70).

52 *Eccl* III (GNO V 333,17–20; tr. Hall 70).

53 *Cant* V (GNO VI 146–154).

- 13 The fig tree has put forth its early fruit,
the vines blossom, they give off fragrance.⁵⁴

The pages which will be the focus of my argument have the following structure:

- A. Gregory begins book v by describing the effect of the *Song* on himself, summarising his exegesis so far.⁵⁵
- B. He offers a spiritual interpretation of the words “Behold he is coming, leaping over the mountains, etc.”.⁵⁶ The “coming” of the lover refers to the incarnation; his speaking through the lattices points to the Word’s speaking to the church through the prophets and the law.
- C. Gregory quotes Ct 2.11–13, then expands on these words himself.⁵⁷ As Gregory notes, the words of the male lover are the woman’s account of what he said: a speech within a speech.⁵⁸
- D. He next explains the meaning of Ct 2.11–13 through allegorical interpretation: the winter signifies the time when “humanity was frozen stiff by idolatry”. The spring denotes humanity’s salvation through the Spirit and the Word.⁵⁹

Why does Gregory expand on the bride’s words (section c)? Why not just give an allegorical interpretation of Ct 2.8–13 (sections B and D)? My suggestion is that Gregory is reading the *Song* as he might read classical Greek literature. Specifically, Gregory assumes that, through being composed in a particular style, the words of the *Song* express mood and character. Furthermore, he also has something quite specific to say about the kind of speech used in this particular biblical text.

In all of this, I suggest, there is a blurring between the plain meaning of the poem and Gregory’s theological interpretation: Gregory constantly slides between references to the bride (ἡ νύμφη) and the soul (ἡ ψυχή). Quite often, he uses no noun at all and simply relies on feminine participles of the verb, exploiting the ambivalence of the fact that the Greek words for bride and soul are both feminine.⁶⁰ As we shall see, there is a similar blurring of the way he refers to the word (ὁ λόγος). In the opening pages of *Cant* v, then, we have a

54 As translated by Norris 149.

55 *Cant* v (GNO VI 137,4–140,7; tr. Norris 151–153).

56 Ct 2.8–9; *Cant* v (GNO VI 140,7–145,13; tr. Norris 153–159).

57 *Cant* v (GNO VI 145,14–147,5; tr. Norris 159).

58 *Cant* v (GNO VI 140,7; tr. Norris 153).

59 *Cant* v (GNO VI 147,5–148,6; tr. Norris 159–161).

60 See for example, *Cant* v (GNO VI 137–138; tr. Norris 151). An idiomatic English translation demands that one supplies a subject (Norris chooses “soul”), but Gregory himself nowhere in these lines names the subject as either “soul” or “bride”.

very good example of a method of interpretation which eludes the common distinction between literal or allegorical interpretation. But this is *not* to say the literal meaning disappears. In fact, Gregory's expansion of the pastoral scene described in the text never ceases to be a description of a landscape which is real within the dramatic narrative of the poem—but it is also a description which carries with it a broader cultural significance or meaning which would have been appreciated by its audience. Consequently, in section C, Gregory is not seeking to decode the text through an allegorical reading which will replace or subsume one (literal) meaning with a replacement (spiritual) meaning.

With regard to mood, in section A Gregory emphasises the emotions which the text provokes in him: “this reading of the philosophy of the *Song of Songs*” causes him both “desire” (ἡ ἐπιθυμία) and “grief” (ἡ λύπη).⁶¹ The word “philosophy” might be thought to suggest a spiritual meaning; in fact, Gregory next summarises the main lines of the *narrative* of the *Song*: “she recognized the sweet apple tree [...] she made herself a lover of its shade [...] she entered the treasure houses of gladness [...] she is sustained by perfumes [...]”⁶² The *Song* says that she can hear her beloved's voice, not see him, thus teaching that she has not truly “seized her goal”.⁶³ Later on, he writes that these are the things which, when understood in their “obvious sense”, (κατὰ τὴν πρόχειρον ἔννοιαν) cause him “grief” (λύπην).⁶⁴ Only with regard to Ct 2.6 does he summarise his own *spiritual* interpretation: “When in her heart she has taken the arrow of love, she herself, in the hands of the archer becomes an arrow directed at the target of Truth by the hands of ‘the Strong One’”.⁶⁵ In these opening pages of *Cant V*, then, Gregory implies that the *Song* not only evokes the sweetness of a woman's experience of love, conveying her mood of mixed desire, joy and grief, but also creates a similarly paradoxical mood in himself.⁶⁶ As Sappho awaited Aphrodite and—we may surmise—sought to stimulate a similar state of expectation in her reader, so Gregory the literary exegete assumes that a well-written poem not only describes emotion but provokes it in the reader. His empathetic emotion is *transformed* by the understanding that the lover rep-

61 *Cant V* (GNO VI 137,4–6; 140,2; tr. Norris 151–152).

62 *Cant V* (GNO VI 137,12–138,3; tr. Norris 151).

63 *Cant V* (GNO VI 138,15–16; tr. Norris 15–16).

64 *Cant V* (GNO VI 140,2–4; tr. Norris 153).

65 *Cant V* (GNO VI 138,3–6; tr. Norris 151).

66 Words for “sweetness”, joy/blessedness and love/desire dominate these lines: τὸ γλυκὺ μῆλον, τῷ καρπῷ καταγλυκανθεῖσα; ἐμακάριζον, τῆς εὐφροσύνης, εὐφραίνεται, τῆς μακαριότητος; ἐπιθυμητὴν, ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ, τῆς ἀγάπης τὸ βέλος. *Cant V* (GNO VI 137,12–138,6; tr. Norris 151).

resents the divine Word—but the emotion is *stimulated* by the *narrative* of the poem as much as by its spiritual interpretation.

Next, when read through the lens of the classical Greek tradition, the reported speech in Ct 2.11–13 suggests a fittingness between the lover's arrival and the season, for the passage contains many of the features of pleasant landscape that we noted above: gentle pastures with flowers, fruit and softly singing birds. To the classical Greek mind this is the appropriate context for a romantic encounter. But, as in Sappho's fragment 2, the erotic spills over into the religious: Gregory's *ekphrasis* of the landscape in section C makes it clear that it is not merely *appropriate* for the lover to be in that pleasant landscape, but that the lover's arrival *makes* the landscape pleasant because he is divine—he is “the maker of Springtime” (ὁ πλάστης τοῦ ἔαρος).⁶⁷ It is as if Gregory had read the references to the groom in the poem “leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills” (v. 8) in the light of Homeric images of gods transforming the landscapes they enter. In sum, Jenkyns' words about Sappho could be applied to the woman's words in the *Song*: for here we find

the combination of personal emotion or experience with the description or evocation of the individual character of a scene. This poem conveys both a mood and a picture, both subjectivity and objectivity, as [she] conveys how she feels, being in a particular place at a particular time.⁶⁸

Furthermore, using Webb's understanding of *ekphrasis* we can see that, through his *ekphrasis* of the landscape (which is an expansion of the woman's words in the *Song*), Gregory intensifies readers' sense of the woman's joyful expectation with the aim that they will imaginatively participate in it. He heightens and intends to provoke in others a mood of combined desire and religious awe.

Gregory's words also delineate the character of the groom. His *ekphrasis* evokes the beauty of spring, thus glorifying “the maker of Springtime” still further: the meadows are “teeming and glorious with blossoms”, he writes, and the flowers “are at their best and ready to be cut”.⁶⁹ The words of the *Song* remind the audience that the garden is *his* garden.⁷⁰ Thus, the beauty and fruitfulness of the garden reflect back on the divine Word, denoting him as the fertile and beautiful source of all creation, which is *his*. It is fair to conclude, then, that

67 *Cant* V (GNO VI 146,5; tr. Norris 159).

68 R. Jenkyns, *Virgil's Experience*, 34.

69 *Cant* V (GNO VI 146,8–9; tr. Norris 159).

70 E.g. Ct 5.1; 6.2.

Gregory reads the *Song* with an understanding that in a literary text, characters are placed in a landscape which is fitting to their character. Nevertheless, in the narrative of the *Song*, the landscape is real; this is a different literary technique from comparing the beloved to a garden.⁷¹

Thirdly, I suggest that Gregory's *ekphrasis* says something not just about the creative power of the Word in nature, but about the nature of discourse—specifically, divine discourse. To understand this we need to take a closer look at precisely *how* Gregory expands the description of spring in *Cant* v.⁷² Gregory's emphatic repetition of λέγει and the use of ὑπογράφει and its cognates at the beginning and end of the passage, imply that he is reading Ct 2.11–13 as a speech with certain intentional features. Gregory also comments on the style of the speech: at the beginning, he says it is done elegantly (γλαφυρῶς: 146,4); at the end he sums up its contents as being “these elegant things” (τῶν γλαφυρῶν τούτων: 147,2). We will shortly return to this particular terminology. Furthermore, Gregory implicitly draws attention to the fact that the description of spring appeals to all the senses, for it evokes the sight of “the meadows teeming and glorious with blossoms” (146,8–9); the sound of the birds (146,12–14) and the fragrance of flowers (146,17–18). The description even alludes to the anticipated taste of the ripening fig and vine (146,14–16) and imagines the touch of those picking flowers and plaiting them into wreathes (146,9–11). Finally, Gregory draws on the ambiguity of ὁ λόγος in a way which is impossible to convey in English: not only does it mean the divine Word and the word of the Biblical text, but it could also be taken to mean “a speech”. For example, Gregory writes that “the Logos embellishes (ἡδύνει) the season with the songs of the birds in the groves” (146,12–13). For a Greek audience Gregory is saying both “*the divine Word* embellishes (ἡδύνει) the season with the songs of the birds in the groves” (creation) and “*the word of Scripture* embellishes the season [...]” (a comment about the richness of Scripture's imagery). Furthermore, the phrase could also mean “*this speech* embellishes the season [...]” (a literary-critical comment, remarking on the quality of language as such, not on its quality as Scripture, and more focussed on the dramatic performance of the speech in the text of the *Song*). As he gives his own literary-critical appreciation, Gregory expands on the passage with elaborate phrasing and beautiful images in order to press home the point: Ct 2.11–13 is an artful speech—an *ekphrasis*—and so is Gregory's recapitulation of it.

71 E.g. Ct 4.12–16.

72 *Cant* v (GNO VI 146,4–147,5; tr. Norris 159).

Why does Gregory want to emphasise this so pointedly? I think there are two reasons, one explicit and one implicit. Gregory's explicit reason for stressing the artfulness of Ct 2.11–13 is expressed most clearly by the conclusion to his own *ekphrasis*:

The Word (ὁ λόγος) thus speaks with elegance in its account (ἀβρύνεται τῇ ὑπογραφῇ) of springtime's beauty, both casting out gloom and dwelling fondly upon accounts of things that afford more pleasure (τοῖς γλυκυτέροις διηγήμασιν). It is best, though, I think, that our understanding not come to rest in the account of these sweet things (τῇ τῶν γλαφυρῶν τούτων ὑπογραφῇ) but rather journey by their help toward the mysteries that these oracles reveal, so that the treasure of the ideas hidden in the words may be brought to light.⁷³

This passage elegantly expresses a familiar idea: the use sweet words about beautiful things as a pedagogical device in order to attract the soul to a better message.⁷⁴ It also echoes Themistius' idea that the best speech does not aim merely at beauty, pleasure or charm.⁷⁵

Gregory's further and implicit reason for his emphasis on this speech is to be found in his use of certain terms like γλαφυρῶς / τῶν γλαφυρῶν, which have a semi-technical literary or rhetorical meaning. The adjective γλαφυρός comes from the verb γλάφω to scrape or hollow out and was the standard Homeric epithet for a ship. When applied to things made by the hand, γλαφυρός came to mean polished, smooth, neat or delicate and when applied to works of the mind it was used to mean subtle, exact, skilful or refined. In other words, it was a word used to convey a high degree of craftsmanship—something which the English word “elegant” does not quite capture.⁷⁶ Eventually, the term γλαφυρός was applied in a specifically literary context to describe a polished and refined style. Foreexample, the treatise *On Style* (commonly attributed to an otherwise unknown “Demetrius” and dating probably from the second century BCE) argues there are four literary styles (χαρακτῆρες).⁷⁷ The grand style (μεγα-

73 *Cant V* (GNO VI 146,13–147,5; tr. Norris 159).

74 E.g. Basil, *De legendis gentiliū libris* (*On reading pagan literature*, otherwise known as *To young men*), 4; Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* I 931–950; IV 8–25.

75 Themistius, *Or.* 20 (tr. Penella 56–57). See p. 294.

76 *The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon* <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsg/#eid=23028&context=lsj&action=from-search> [accessed 12.2.2015].

77 For a discussion of authorship and date see Doreen Innes' introduction to her translation in: S. Halliwell et al., *Aristotle, Poetics; Longinus, On the Sublime; Demetrius, On Style*, Cambridge (Ma) 1995, 313–315; 320–321.

λοπρεπής) is complex and weighty; the plain (ισχνός) is simple and light. There are two intermediate styles: the forceful (δεινός) which is weighty, but quite simple and the elegant or refined style (γλαφυρός), which is light, but quite complex. The γλαφυρός style is “witty and cheerful” (χαριεντισμός καὶ λόγος ἱλαρός).⁷⁸ It sometimes tends in the direction of outright comedy (which expresses wit in plain words). At other times, in the hands of lyric poets, it is more dignified and is characterised above all by “charm” (χάρις)—a word to which Demetrius frequently returns.⁷⁹ Whereas the comic γλαφυρός style aims to “make us laugh”, the writer of the lyric γλαφυρός style⁸⁰ “aims to give pleasure” (εὐφραίνειν).⁸¹ Demetrius regards lyric poetry as a sophisticated type of γλαφυρός style and analyses in some detail which kinds of composition and diction lend themselves to it.⁸² He also delineates this style’s appropriate subject matter: “gardens of the nymphs, marriage songs, loves or the poetry of Sappho generally” (νυμφαῖοι κῆποι, ὑμέναιοι, ἔρωτες, ὅλη ἢ Σαπφoῦς ποίησις).⁸³ Indeed, Demetrius returns repeatedly to Sappho as his archetypal poet of charm, praising her because, “in words which are themselves beautiful (καλλιεπής) and attractive (ἡδεῖα), she sings of beauty or love or spring or the halcyon”.⁸⁴

Another example is the teacher of rhetoric and champion of Attic style, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a first century BCE contemporary of Caesar Augustus. In his work praising Demosthenes, Dionysius sets out a broad typology of ways of achieving a harmonious arrangement of words. Some writers seek a “firm, grave, austere style of composition with its old-fashioned dignity and avoidance of frills”.⁸⁵ Others seek “the polished (γλαφυράν), articulate, spectacular style, full of ornament and delicate touches, the style with which festival audiences and cosmopolitan crowds are lulled into silence”.⁸⁶ Finally, a third group mix all that is best of the other styles.⁸⁷ Although Dionysius ostensibly regards all three approaches as ways of achieving verbal harmony, nevertheless he seems inclined to favour the intermediate mixed style. For an Atticist like Dionysius, then, a style characterised as γλαφυρός was at one pole of a range of

78 Demetrius, *De elocutione* § 128 (tr. Innes 429).

79 *Ibidem*.

80 Whom Demetrius designates as ὁ εὐχάριστος: *De elocutione* § 168 (tr. Innes 450).

81 *De elocutione* § 168 (tr. Innes 453).

82 *De elocutione* (§§ 137–155, 173–185) (tr. Innes 433–445, 455–461).

83 *De elocutione* (§§ 132, 163) (tr. Innes 431, 449).

84 Adapting Innes’ word-order: *De elocutione* § 166 (tr. Innes 451).

85 *Demosthenes*, 36 (tr. Usher i 378–379).

86 τὴν γλαφυράν καὶ λιγυράν καὶ θεατρικὴν καὶ πολὺ τὸ κομψὸν καὶ μάλα ἐπιφαίνουσιν: *Demosthenes*, 36 (tr. Usher i 378–379).

87 *Demosthenes*, 36 (tr. Usher i 378–379).

Greek styles, whereas for Demetrius it was more in the middle. Both critics are agreed, however, that a γλαφυρός style is poetic and attractive and not suited to serious disputation or the law courts. This is further indicated by Dionysius' description of the rhetor Isocrates: although his style is "pure" (καθαρά) and possesses "lucidity and vividness" (τό σαφές, τό έναργές), Dionysius thinks that the composition of his sentences is neither natural nor simple; rather than being suited for the law-courts, it creates "an effect of ceremonious and ornate dignity" (εἰς σεμνότητα ποιητικὴν καὶ ποικίλην).⁸⁸ Dionysius concludes: "For this orator seeks beauty of expression (τὴν εὐέπειαν) by every means, and aims at polish rather than simplicity (τοῦ γλαφυρῶς λέγειν [...]) ἢ τοῦ ἀφελῶς".⁸⁹

Theories of style in late antiquity were complex and are difficult to generalise: Christoph Klock's comment that this realm of language was "technical but imprecise" is very apposite.⁹⁰ However, my research suggests that there was a fairly constant use of the words γλαφυρός in Greek (and *elegans* and *politus* in Latin) to denote a style associated with lyric verse, with some kinds of comedy, with Isocratean rhetoric. Furthermore, a γλαφυρός style was often associated with terms such as χάρις, ἱλαρός, καλλιεπής, κάλλος, ἡδύς, χάρις, γλυκὺς, εὐφραίνειν. Thus Gregory not only emphatically bookends his *ekphrasis* with the use of γλαφυρός (and its cognates) but reinforces this terminology with other terms appropriate to the γλαφυρός style: for example, τὴν χάριν, ἡδύνει, ἀβρύνεται, τοῖς γλυκυτέροις, εὐφραίνω. In speeches a γλαφυρός style was associated especially with encomium (Gregory uses words from the roots ἐγκωμι- and ἐπαιν- numerous times in his *Homilies on the Song*).⁹¹ Its ability to charm and delight was appropriate when the subject-matter was both love and philosophy—hence Plato's philosophical rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* playfully emulated this style whilst also praising dialectic.

88 *Isocrates*, 2 (tr. Usher i 106–109).

89 *Isocrates*, 2 (tr. Usher i 108–109).

90 "Technisch aber unpräziser", in: C. Klock, *Untersuchungen zu Stil und Rhythmus bei Gregor von Nyssa: ein Beitrag zum Rhetorikverständnis der griechischen Väter*, Frankfurt am Main 1987, 15.

91 For example, for ἐγκωμι- see GNO VI 80,4; 80,16–17; 105,8; 187,10; 215,7; 216,17; 219,20; 221,8; 223, 12; 223,18; 224,12; 225,17; 232,12; 242,16; 271,8; 272,9; 279,16; 289,15; 289,17; 406,24; 410,18; 413,10; 415,14; 431,2; 437,9; 445,6; 450,15; 453,7. At 242,6 Gregory explicitly says that it is the Word who presents the praises.

5 Conclusions

What conclusions do I draw from my wander through the landscape of Gregory's fifth Homily on the *Song*? With his use of a particular vocabulary, Gregory of Nyssa is telling his audience that Ct 2.11–13 is itself an *ekphrasis* of spring, written in an elegant (γλαφυρός) style which is suited to its subjects (gardens, a bride, a marriage song and love), to pastoral lyric and to non-forensic rhetoric, in addition to characterising Plato's works. Gregory picks up on this style in his own *ekphrasis*. This, together with his own writing about landscape elsewhere, is my justification for reading Gregory's *ekphrasis* in light of the Greek literary tradition.

Following Ruth Webb's analysis of the technique, I suggest that Gregory inherited from his rhetorical training an understanding that the purpose of *ekphrasis* was to stimulate the audience's imaginative and emotional participation in the speaker's words. This is how he both read the *Song* and interpreted it for others. As a preacher, his aim was to provoke his listeners' "active engagement" with the text of the *Song*.⁹² By focussing on this particular passage I have shown that he did this, not only through allegorical exegesis aimed at revealing a deeper spiritual meaning, but also through the technique of *ekphrasis*. This means that passages like the one we have studied here are not just decorative asides—playful breaths of fresh air in between passages of demanding spiritual exegesis—but are absolutely integral to Gregory's exposition and argument.

The survey of landscape literature helped to fill out *what kind* of emotional engagement might be anticipated from a text in which a character describing a god's imminent arrival in a pleasant place: that is, participation in the character's anxious hope, anticipated joy and awe. Because of their shared literary inheritance, Gregory does not have to spell these emotions out for his audience, but he can stimulate the audience's participation in the bride's feelings by heightening the effect of the *Song* with his own *ekphrasis* describing the transformation of a landscape by "the maker of Springtime". He prepares the audience for their emotional participation by prefacing this *ekphrasis* with his account of how the *Song* has already made him feel desire and grief.

However, our analysis of landscapes in literature broadens our understanding of Gregory's *ekphrasis* still further. Using Richard Jenkyns' work, I suggested that the *ekphrasis* emphasises the "fit" between the lover/the Word and the landscape: its beauty and order reflect the beauty and ordering power of its creator, thus heightening the woman's/the audience's awe still more. Crucially,

92 Borrowing the phrase from Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 193.

in order to have this effect, the text must really be about a landscape (albeit a fictional one). The landscape is not a symbol of something completely other; rather, the landscape of the narrative expands as it points outwards to the “landscape” of the cosmos. The material denotes the material—not a spiritual “other”.

Finally, I suggested that there was a literary convention that words about landscape were a good context in which to ponder the nature of verbal composition itself. This prepares Gregory’s readers to ask whether Gregory himself is offering such reflections. I suggest that Gregory is indeed contemplating words in this passage, but that he is also, for obvious reasons, contemplating the effect and the nature of the divine Word. Verna Harrison and Sarah Coakley have written persuasively about the *gender* fluidities in Gregory’s exegesis of the *Song*.⁹³ Following my observations above about Gregory’s use of the word *logos* in this passage, I suggest that here one finds him playing with *authorial* fluidity. Throughout the text, the male lover of the *Song* symbolises the divine Word; thus the *ekphrasis* of Ct 2.11–13 is spoken by the divine Word. It is clear from the context that Gregory is thinking of the divine Word both in terms of the Word which inspired the Old Testament and the incarnate Word; although he thinks that the “voice” of the Word is apparent in the former, while the Word truly arrived in the incarnation.⁹⁴ But *logos* also indicates the lover’s/the divine Word *speech*—his *ekphrasis* of spring. As Gregory reminds his reader, this speech is relayed to the audience of the *Song* through the woman’s words; it is then recapitulated by Gregory’s own *ekphrasis*. Thus, *logos* is both a person and his words; the words are the words of God passed on to Gregory’s audience through the authorship of the woman in the *Song* and via Gregory himself. The idea that the encounter with the divine in the *Song* results in the believer speaking God’s words has been identified in Gregory’s allegorical exegesis by other scholars.⁹⁵ I suggest this passage conveys the same point, admittedly with an understanding that the lover is the Word, but *without* any allegorical interpretation of the character of the woman at this point. Gregory the exegete is simply expanding

93 V.E.F. Harrison, “Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology”, *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, 41/2 (1990), 441–447; Id., “A Gender Reversal in Gregory of Nyssa’s First Homily on the *Song of Songs*”, *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993) 34–38; Id., “Gender, Generation, and Virginité in Cappadocian Theology”, *The Journal of Theological Studies* NS 47/1 (1996) 38–68; S. Coakley, “Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa: Introduction-Gender, Trinitarian Analogies and the Pedagogy of The *Song*”, *Modern Theology* 18/4 (2002) 431–443; Id., *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay “on the Trinity”*, Cambridge 2013.

94 *Cant V* (GNO VI 142,9–14; tr. Norris 155; 144,19–145,13; tr. Norris 157–159).

95 M. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence*, Oxford—New York 2004, chap. 6.

on the Song's words in order to convey the effect of the narrative *as* a poetic narrative, not in its spiritual application.

Having established this authorial fluidity, one can turn to the quality of the speech shared by these authors/speakers. As I have shown above, Gregory uses a specific vocabulary to denote it clearly as *γλαφυρός*—that is, elegant, sophisticated, delightfully persuasive speech. Gregory was working in an era when the crude opposition between simple, plain and truthful Christian discourse and sophisticated, but errant/corrupt pagan discourse had softened somewhat.⁹⁶ However, it is still striking, I think, that he ascribes the *γλαφυρός* style to God. Rather than simply asserting that humans must fit their language to their audience, Gregory claims not only that God fits his language to human particularity but that the power of language to seduce can, with the right author, be a good thing. In this Gregory affirms the *theological* value of this *γλαφυρός* style. Consequently, although he may have derided Eunomius' "Isocratean" rhetoric, Gregory was not thereby asserting that a Christian should always maintain a purer, plainer style.⁹⁷ Here he asserts the value—and the essential seriousness—of a style that has often been regarded as at best playful and at worst trivial or decadent.⁹⁸ According to Gregory, if the Word speaks elegantly, and thereby draws souls to him, then so too may the Christian preacher.

No doubt some readers have regarded the *γλαφυρός* style as decadent because of its firm association with material (dare one say, feminine) subjects—with shepherds, spring flowers, gentle birdsong, vines, vineyards, figs and other fruits, not to mention desiring bodies—rather than the immaterial abstractions of philosophy. I am not suggesting here that Gregory's exegesis of the *Song* *never* focusses on the immaterial and the transcendent; however, I *am* suggesting that there are places in his Homilies where materiality and the divine coincide more emphatically than one might think. For Gregory, the Word who says, "Behold the winter is past" is not merely the inspirer of Scripture, but also the *incarnate* Christ who entered the world at a particular place and time. Indeed, the setting of the garden recalls not only the classical gardens into

96 W. Kinzig, "The Greek Christian Writers", in: S.E. Porter, *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.–A.D. 400*, Leiden-New York 1997, 634–641.

97 *Eun* III/5 24 (GNO II 168).

98 Whereas I am assuming here an ancient theory of (at least) three styles, there is a long tradition of scholarship, following from the seminal work of Eduard Norden, that divides Greek prose into serious, plain, philosophical and decadent, fancy, poetic styles, the *γλαφυρός* style being very firmly in the latter category. I believe this judgment to rest on a fundamentally flawed reading back of the Atticist/Asianist rhetorical binary of the 1st century BCE on to earlier Greek literature. See E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance*, Leipzig 1898.

which anthropomorphic gods enter, but also the garden of Eden (hence the second Adam) and the garden in which the risen Christ encounters Mary Magdalen.⁹⁹ The *Song* is therefore not just about the timeless encounter of the Word with a human soul, but as Gregory's comments on the divine economy make clear,¹⁰⁰ it is also about the Word entering his "garden" of creation to restore it and its residents to their original order, beauty and fertility. Just as the materiality of the world is redeemable along with human souls (although neither are yet perfect), so Gregory seems to indicate that the *forms* of human speech might be redeemable along with the ideas it attempts to express (although neither will encapsulate the divine). Thus, I conclude, we need to pay attention to the body of the texts Gregory reads and writes—their form, style, rhetoric—as well as their spiritual meaning. For Gregory, the *Song* is about the human soul meeting the divine; but it is also, sometimes, about incarnation, creation and the joy of texts.

Bibliography

- Andersen, Ø. *Im Garten der Rhetorik: die Kunst der Rede in der Antike*, Darmstadt 2001.
- Aubineau, M. *Gregory of Nyssa, Traité de La Virginité*, Paris 1971.
- Cassin, M. *L'écriture de la controverse chez Grégoire de Nysse: polémique littéraire et exégèse dans le Contre Eunome*, Paris 2012.
- Coakley, S. "Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa: Introduction-Gender, Trinitarian Analogies and the Pedagogy of The *Song*", *Modern Theology* 18/4 (2002) 431–443;
- Coakley, S. *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay "on the Trinity"*, Cambridge 2013.
- Fox, K. *Watching the English*, London 2004.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, ed. Langerbeck, H. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, Vol. vi, Leiden 1986.
- Hall, S.G. (ed.). *Gregory of Nyssa, Homilies on Ecclesiastes: An English Version with Supporting Studies: Proceedings of the Seventh International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (St. Andrews, 5–10 September 1990)*, Berlin—New York 1993.
- Halliwell, S. et al. (edd.) *Aristotle, Poetics; Longinus, On the Sublime; Demetrius, On Style*, Cambridge (Ma) 1995.
- Harrison, V.E.F. "Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology", *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, 41/2 (1990), 441–447;

99 Mary Magdalen encountered the risen Christ in a κήπος (Jn 19.41); she assumes Christ to be the keeper of the garden (κηπουρός; Jn 20.15). My thanks to the participants in the discussion of my paper in Rome for drawing my attention to these points.

100 *Cant* v (GNO VI 140,9–12; tr. Norris 153).

- Harrison, V.E.F. "A Gender Reversal in Gregory of Nyssa's First Homily on the *Song of Songs*", *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993) 34–38;
- Harrison, V.E.F. "Gender, Generation, and Virginité in Cappadocian Theology", *The Journal of Theological Studies* NS 47/1 (1996) 38–68.
- Homer, *Iliad*, tr. A.T. Murray—W.F. Wyatt, Cambridge (Ma) 1999.
- Homer, *Odyssey*, tr. A.T. Murray—J. Henderson, Cambridge (Ma) 2002.
- Horace, *The Odes and Epodes*, tr. C.E. Bennett, London 1988.
- Jenkyns, R. *Virgil's Experience: Nature and History: Times, Names and Places*, Oxford 1998.
- Kinzig, W. "The Greek Christian Writers", in: S.E. Porter, *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.–A.D. 400*, Leiden-New York 1997, 634–641.
- Klock, C. *Untersuchungen zu Stil und Rhythmus bei Gregor von Nyssa: ein Beitrag zum Rhetorikverständnis der griechischen Väter*, Frankfurt am Main 1987.
- Laird, M. *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence*, Oxford—New York 2004.
- Lawson, J. "The Roman Garden", *Greece and Rome*, 19–57 (1950) 97–105.
- Méridier, L. *L'Influence de la seconde sophistique sur l'oeuvre de Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1906.
- Norden, E. *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance*, Leipzig 1898.
- Norris, R.A. *Gregory of Nyssa, Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta (GA) 2012.
- Penella, R.J. *The Private Orations of Themistius*, Berkeley 2000.
- Plato, *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, tr. H.N. Fowler, Cambridge (Ma) 1990.
- Quest-Ritson, C. *The English Garden: A Social History*, London 2001.
- Webb, R. *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*, Farnham and Burlington (VT) 2009.
- West, M.L. (tr.) *Greek Lyric Poetry: The Poems and Fragments of the Greek Iambic, Elegiac, and Melic Poets*, Oxford 1993;
- West, M.L. (tr.) *Homeric hymns, Homeric apocrypha, lives of Homer*, Cambridge (Ma) 2003.

Apokatastasis and Epektasis in *Cant* and Origen

Ilaria Ramelli

1 The Key Dedication to Olympias

Gregory dedicated *Cant* to Deaconess Olympias,¹ whom he with deference and admiration calls σεμνοπρεπεστάτη, “most dignified, most reverend”. Σεμνοπρέπεια was a respectful, ceremonial style of address, used e.g. for a bishop by Nyssen (*Epist* XXI) and Nazianzen (*Ep.* 202). For Olympias, also an ordained ecclesiastical minister, Gregory even employs the superlative. This move is significant. For Olympias was a sympathiser of Origen and his followers. Nazianzen, another Origenian and, according to tradition, the compiler of the Philocalia of Origen, sent her a poem for her marriage. After her husband’s death, she founded a monastery in Constantinople, spending her wealth for charitable works. Not only did Nyssen dedicate *Cant* to her, but also his brother Peter was the object of her beneficence.² She defended the Origenian monks expelled from Egypt by Theophilus—an Origenian scared by the Anthropomorphites.³ They were received in Constantinople by Olympias and, on her recommendation, her bishop John Chrysostom.⁴ From the Dialogue on the Life of St. John Chrysostom attributed to Palladius,⁵ Olympias’ key role emerges. Palladius, an Origenian monk himself, a supporter of Chrysostom, an acquaintance of the Tall Brothers, and Evagrius’ disciple,⁶ reports how Olympias courageously received the Origenian monks⁷ and describes Nyssen as “the wisest, freest from passions, illustrious for the wealth of his learning, the brother of bishop Basil, honoured like an apostle”.⁸ The Dialogue is inspired by Plato’s *Phaedo*, like Nyssen’s *An et res*.

It is therefore no chance that Gregory dedicated to the Origenian Olympias his last work, in which he still supported *apokatastasis* and followed Origen’s

1 On whom see H. Grieser, “Olympias”, *RAC* 26 (2013) 125–131; V. McCarthy, “The Pure Eye of Her Soul,” in *Orthodox Monasticism*, ed. J. McGuckin, New York 2014, 131–145.

2 Palladius, *Dialogus de vita sancti Joannis Chrysostomi*, 17.

3 See my *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, Leiden 2013, 584–591; P.A. Patterson, *The Anthropomorphite Controversy*, Tübingen 2012.

4 Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 7–9; Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 11–13.

5 *AD* 407/8.

6 *HL* 23.

7 Palladius, *Dialogus de vita sancti Joannis Chrysostomi*, 16–17.

8 *HL* 86, PG 34,1188C.

exegesis and theology in many respects. This dedication comes in a Preface defending Biblical allegoresis in the Origenian tradition, which detects the φιλοσοφία hidden in the *Song of Songs* (ss). Gregory overtly defends Origen's allegoresis in his programmatic preface to his own exegesis in *Cant*. Against "certain churchmen" who attacked Origen, Gregory endorses the investigation into Scripture's αινίγματα and ὑπόνοιαι. The terminology itself is Origen's—note the absence of ἀλλήγορία, as in Origen's works addressed to Christians: Origen and Gregory disliked this term due to its relation to "pagan" allegoresis of myths. Gregory's characterisation of the *Song of Songs* as the Holy of Holies follows Origen's inclusion of the Song in the δευτερώσεις as Scripture's culmination.

This and else, already in the Preface, is a declaration of Origenian allegiance, still at the close of Gregory's life. This indicates that his *sequela Origenis* never ceased, but continued to the end. This does not mean that every exegetical solution in *Cant* depends on Origen. Gregory's reception of Origen was insightful and creative; it is the deepest, most intelligent and exact I know. Gregory is likely the theologian who best understood Origen's thought, so misunderstood on many sides.⁹ Origen's heritage in Gregory's *Cant* is clear in the main doctrines and exegetical lines, even to the point of verbal borrowings from Origen's commentary—as, e.g., Gregory's exegesis of 1 Cor 15.28 takes every passage of its main argument, and many words, from Origen.¹⁰ Origen's importance in shaping the Christian exegetical tradition of the *Song of Songs* is hard to overestimate;¹¹ his importance in shaping Gregory's *Cant* is still harder.

2 Apokatastasis and Epektasis: Interconnection, Christological Foundations, Roots in Origen

The *apokatastasis-epektasis* relation in Gregory's *Cant* is grounded in Christology and comes from Origen. Of Gregory's two nominal mentions of Origen, one comes—strategically—in *Cant*, the other in *Thaum* 13.11. In *Cant* 13.3 Gregory refers encomiastically to Origen's rich, splendid exegesis of the *Song of Songs*.

9 I. Ramelli, "The Reception of Origen's Thought in Western Theological and Philosophical Traditions", in: A.-C. Jacobsen, *Origeniana undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought. Papers of the 11th International Origen Congress, Aarhus University, 26–31 August 2013*, BETL 279, Leuven 2016, 443–467.

10 See my "Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology in *Tunc et ipse*", in: V.H. Drecoll—M. Berg-haus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarianism*, Leiden 2011, 445–478.

11 See, e.g., A. Astell—C.R. Cavadini, "The Song of Songs", in: J.A. Lamm (eds.), *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*, Oxford 2013, 27–40.

In both passages he calls Origen φιλόπονος, as Athanasius called him φιλοπονώτατος.¹² Gobar remarked that Nyssen “mentions Origen with admiration and reverence”, εὐφρόμως.¹³

Origen allegorised the *Song of Songs* as the love between Christ and the church and between Christ and the soul.¹⁴ This influenced virtually all subsequent commentators, most of whom showed a predilection for either of Origen’s exegetical alternatives. The “psychological” one was picked up—albeit not exclusively—by Nyssen, who interpreted the *Song of Songs* as allegorical expression of the soul’s infinite tension (ἐπέκτασις) toward God.¹⁵ On this leit-motif Gregory grafted other theological themes dear to him. He abundantly used Origen’s *Commentarium in Canticum*, sometimes even echoing it word for word, but orienting his interpretation toward the main themes of his own spirituality.¹⁶ The most important is the soul’s *epektasis* toward the knowledge of God, which, in an apophatic theological context,¹⁷ takes the form of *unio mystica*. This is not static, but a progression without end, as God’s nature is always beyond creatural reach.

The first part of *Cant VIII* theorises *epektasis*; as stated at the beginning, Paul, after his mystical experience,

extended even more toward on high, and never stopped in the course of his ascent. The good reached did not put an end to his desire [...]. What remains beyond is infinitely greater than what is grasped every time, and this experience repeats itself continually for the person who participates in it, as she enjoys a continual growing [...] the divine substance’s infinite and incommensurable nature always remains beyond every possibility of comprehension [...]. The person who runs toward You always grows and ascends toward ever higher levels, in proportion to her ascent into the Good [...] the person who ascends never stops, because she continues

12 See my “The Dialogue of Adamantius. Part One”, in: A. Brent—M. Vinzent (eds.), *Studia Patristica* LII, Leuven 2012, 71–98.

13 Photius, *Bibliotheca*, 232,291b.

14 Adamavit enim eum [God’s Logos] sive anima [...] sive ecclesia (*prol.* 1,1).

15 On Gregory’s Biblical foundation of *epektasis* see O. Sferlea, “L’usage de l’Écriture dans la réflexion sur l’infinité divine et sur le progrès spirituel sans fin chez Grégoire”, in: M. Cassin—H. Grélier (eds.), *Grégoire de Nysse: la Bible dans la construction de son discours*, Paris 2008, 41–54.

16 R. Placida, “La presenza di Origene nelle omelie sul *Cantico* di Gregorio di Nissa”, *VetChr* 34 (1997) 33–49.

17 See my “The Divine as Inaccessible Object of Knowledge in Ancient Platonism”, *JHI* 75 (2014) 167–188.

from one beginning to the next [...] the soul ascends from height to height, pushed from a great desire to another even greater and uninterruptedly proceeds toward the infinite through loftier and loftier realities.

Another biblical model of *epektasis* is Moses in *Cant* I, where Gregory describes *epektasis* as grounded in love for the highest Good, which can never be attained:

its fruition becomes more and more an impulse toward a greater desire, as through participation in the goods it extends [τείνω] our desire further and further [...]. Thus Moses, thanks to the mouth-to-mouth contact obtained by God's gift, after so great theophanies experienced in his spirit an even stronger desire for those kisses, so strong as to ask to see the one whom he desired, as though he had not yet contemplated him [...] their longing never had an end, since all they had obtained from God, for the fruition of what they had desired, for them was but matter and tinder of an even more ardent yearning.

The vertigo of the infinitely progressing ascent to God is manifest at the beginning of *Cant* v: "I considered the soul blessed on account of its ascent [...]. I thought it had reached the summit of beatitude [...] but the trials it has overcome are but a prologue to the ascent itself".

It is clear in *Cant* that Gregory grounds *epektasis*—already developed in *Vit Moys* and *Inscr*—in God's infinity (see also below), e.g. in *Cant* vi:¹⁸ if the soul-bride, even after receiving the object of her desire, is still perplexed and dissatisfied, then

the divine nature's greatness knows no limit, and no measure of knowledge sets bounds to a seeker's looking—bounds beyond which no one who is reaching to the heights must cease to move ahead. On the contrary, the intelligence that makes its course upwards by searching into what lies beyond it is so constituted that every fulfillment of knowledge that human nature can attain becomes the starting point of desire for things yet more exalted.

This motif is connected to the continual creation of rational creatures, as clarified in *Cant* vi:¹⁹ the intellectual nature is divided into two: the Creator, uncre-

18 *Cant* vi (GNO VI 179–180; R. Norris, trans., *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Leiden-Atlanta, 2012, 191–193).

19 *Cant* vi (GNO VI 174; Norris, *Gregory: Homilies*, 185–187).

ated, eternal, and immutable Good, and rational creatures, “brought into being by creation/foundation,” διὰ κτίσεως. This second kind of intellectual nature

looks eternally upon the First Cause of things and is preserved in every respect in the Good by its participation in what transcends it. It is also, in a certain fashion, always being created [πάντοτε κτίζεται] and changed for the better by being enhanced in goodness [διὰ τῆς ἐν τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἐπαυξησεως]. For this reason, no endpoint [πέρας] can be conceived for it either and its growth [αὐξησιν] toward the better is not confined by any limit [ὄρω τινί], but the good given at any particular time is always a starting point for something more and better [ἀρχὴν τοῦ ὑπερκειμένου καὶ μείζονος].

Epektasis is profoundly interconnected in Gregory with *apokatastasis* as rational creatures' *oikeiōsis*. For their infinite tension toward God is a tension toward the return to God-Good, their original (ἀρχαία) and proper (οἰκεία) condition before they received evil, i.e. God's initial plan. Gregory, like Origen, repeatedly defines *apokatastasis* as a return to τὸ ἀρχαῖον and τὸ οἰκείον, linking ἀρχή and τέλος. E.g., he repeats that ἀνάστασις ἐστὶν ἢ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν ἀποκατάστασις and represents *apokatastasis* as the rational creature's *oikeiōsis* or return to what is οἰκείον to it, i.e. God-Good.²⁰ As Origen affirmed, ἀποκατάστασις ἐστὶν εἰς τὰ οἰκεία.²¹ But God's plan will be fulfilled only in the end, and there will be no ultimate completion of this fulfillment, given God's infinity. Here *epektasis* relates to *apokatastasis*. The end will be similar to, but greater than, the beginning, as ὁμοίωσις to God will be greater than the initial εἰκῶν, because it will be not a datum, but the result of voluntary tension toward God.²² As Gregory remarked already in *Mort*, following Origen, “The τέλος of the travel [...] is the restoration to the original condition [ἢ πρὸς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκατάστασις], which is nothing other than ὁμοίωσις to the divine.”²³ This tension will know no κόρος—which determined the initial fall due to lack of love—because God is always beyond what is received.²⁴ For God is infinite, and love for God will never be fully satisfied. If rational creatures will not fall again in the end, but will love God more and more and receive more and more of God's goods, always growing in this developing spiritual endowment, this is due to the manifesta-

20 Documentation in my “Οἰκείωσις in Gregory's Theology”, in: J. Leemans—M. Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium III*, Leiden 2014, 643–659.

21 Origen, *Homiliae in Ieremiam*, 14,18.

22 Origen, *De principiis*, III 6,1.

23 *Mort* 60,26–27 (GNO IX, G. Lozza, *Gregorio di Nissa: Discorso sui defunti*, Turin 1991).

24 *Mort* 19 (GNO IX, Lozza 19).

tion of God's love through Christ, as already Origen clarified.²⁵ The ascent motif is common to *epektasis* as described throughout *Cant* and to *apokatastasis* as defined in *Opif*:

The grace of the resurrection announced to us is nothing other than the fallen's restoration to their original condition [εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκατάστασιν]. The grace we expect is a sort of re-ascent [ἐπάνοδος τις] to the first kind of life, since it lifts up again to Paradise the being that had been chased from it.²⁶

Humanity's initial—and final—state is described by Gregory as grace and beatitude still at the end of his life, e.g. in *Cant* xv:²⁷ “the original beatitude [πρώτη μακαριότης] of our nature”. The idea of restoration as return to the original beatitude is indebted to Origen. Gregory echoes him when in *Cant* xv²⁸ he connects τέλος with ἀρχή: “as creation exists from the beginning thanks to the divine power, every creature's τέλος is connected with its ἀρχή”, but the end will be, not statically identical to, but better than, the beginning, and will involve an infinite development in the *logika*'s love for God. For the return to the πρῶτον οἰκεῖον, God-Good, must be voluntary: the infinite, ascending movement “home” (God) which characterises *apokatastasis* and *epektasis*, is voluntary, dictated by love. Free will shall never leave the *logika*, as Origen also maintained,²⁹ but will become the instrument of their restoration, salvation, and deification, as is clear e.g. in *Mort*:

That free mastery over ourselves [ἐξουσία] could remain in our nature, but evil might be removed from it, divine Wisdom excogitated this plan: allow the human being to do whatever it wanted and taste all the evils it wished, and thus learn from experience what it preferred to the Good, and then come back, with desire, to its original beatitude, voluntarily [ἐκουσίως], banishing from its own nature all that which is subject to passions and irrational, by purifying itself in this life by meditation and philosophy, or by plunging after death into the purifying fire.³⁰

25 Origen, *Commentarius in Epistulam ad Romanos*, v 10,195–226.

26 *Op hom* (PG 44,188CD).

27 *Cant* xv (GNO VI 439,18–19).

28 *Cant* xv (GNO VI 457,21–458,1).

29 Manere naturae rationabili semper liberum arbitrium (Origen, *Commentarius in Epistulam ad Romanos*, IV 10).

30 *Mort* 15,64 (GNO IX, Lozza 64).

On earth or after, all are purified.³¹

In Gregory's intellectualistic ethics, as in Origen's, freedom is not freedom to sin, which is enslavement to sin, but freedom from passions and evil, to adhere to the Good without obstacles, actualising one's human, rational nature in God's image and thus free.³² Freedom is knowledge; will depends on intellect. Evil is chosen when mistaken for a good, out of insufficient knowledge and/or obnubilation. So Origen Socratically traced the origin of sin to ignorance and wrong belief: *Recte peccatum insipientiam nominavit*.³³ *male credit quicumque peccat*.³⁴ The choice of evil is the fruit of a deceived, mistaken intellect that must be instructed and cured. This is Christ-Logos' task. If one's intellect is illuminated and achieves the knowledge of the Good, one will adhere to it. This illumination makes the object of *De principiis*, II 11. *Apokatastasis* is here described as enlightenment and direct vision of truth. Origen, inspiring Gregory's infinite *epektasis*, depicts the process of instruction and nourishment in knowledge as without end: the intellect "continues to feed on suitable foods in the right measure [...] this food is for all the contemplation and knowledge of God".³⁵ Precisely in his Commentary on the Song of Songs, Gregory's model for *Cant*, Origen spoke of a continual renewal in rational creatures, in an infinite tension toward God's image: the face of the soul "is renewed every day after the image of its Creator";³⁶ "always will they forget what is behind and tend toward what is ahead";³⁷ *illae animae cotidie innovantur ad imaginem eius qui creavit eas [...] per innovationem sui imaginem in se reparam Filii Dei*.³⁸

In the light of Origen's and Gregory's ethical intellectualism, one can understand how for them free will is compatible with providence enacting universal salvation. Origen repeatedly expressed this compatibility, e.g.: "God providentially takes care of everyone, respecting all *logika's* free will".³⁹ Rational creatures will adhere to God voluntarily: "all the world will submit to the Father,

31 Cf. *Or cat* 8: the medication of virtue has been applied to the soul in this life. If it does not heal, a therapy awaits it in the next (GNO III/4 31–34).

32 "If, thanks to our solicitude in this life or purification by fire in the next, our soul will be able to liberate itself from irrational emotions, nothing will be left to prevent it from contemplating the Good [...] it will be found joined to what is proper and familiar to itself [ὁκεῖον]". *An et res* (GNO III/3 66,11–18).

33 Origen, *Homilia in 1 Psalm*, 37,4.

34 Origen, *Homiliae in Ezechielem*, 9,1.

35 Origen, *De principiis*, II 11,7.

36 Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum*, IV 2,17; cf. 2 Cor 4,6; Col 3,10.

37 Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum* III 13,36; cf. Phil 3,13.

38 Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum* III 8,10; cf. Col 3,10.

39 Origen, *De principiis*, III 5,8. Cf. Origen, *De principiis*, II 1,2; III 5,5; I 8,3 etc., until the later *C. Matt.* x 3.

not by violence or necessity that compels to subjection, but by means of word, reason, teaching, imitation of the best, good norms, and even threats, when appropriate”.⁴⁰ Origen elaborated his *apokatastasis* doctrine on the basis of his defence of free will against “Gnostic” determinism, as is clear from *De Principiis* III, which begins with this defence, within a concern for theodicy, and ends up theorising *apokatastasis*. The process of instruction, for Gregory and Origen, is not interrupted by death, because the intellectual soul—God’s image—does not cease to live after its separation from the mortal body, and at resurrection will receive an incorruptible body that will be no hindrance to intellectual activity. This activity and love of God will run on forever in *epektasis*.

Gregory supported *apokatastasis* until the end of life, in *Cant*, where it is joined to the *epektasis* doctrine. In *Cant* IV he claims that the τέλος is “that love may always increase and develop, until the One who “wants all to be saved and reach the knowledge of Truth”⁴¹ has realised his will [...] until the Bridegroom’s good will is accomplished. This will is that all humans be saved and reach the knowledge of Truth”. God’s universally saving will shall be fulfilled. *Cant* xv, probably Gregory’s last work, multiplies the references to *apokatastasis* and its conclusion is devoted to the description of restoration after the vanishing of evilness from all. Gregory notes, with Paul and Origen, that “God receives everyone in his order, giving to each in proportion to his merits”—the definition of justice. But God’s justice does not contradict God’s love: Gregory quotes Rm 8.35; 38–39 on God’s invincible love, adding: “if, as is written,⁴² love will utterly dispel fear, and fear, transforming itself, will become love, then it will be found that what is saved is a unity, since all will be unified with one another, in connaturality with the only Good thanks to perfection”.⁴³ The eventual ἐνωσις—one of *apokatastasis*’ traits in Origen and Gregory—will involve all *logika*, as Gregory details immediately after: “The run for this beatitude is common to all souls of every order [...] until all look at the same object of their desire and become one and the same thing and no evilness will remain in anyone. Then God will really be “all in all”.⁴⁴ For all, thanks to the union with one another, will be joined in communion with the Good, in Jesus Christ”. Gregory is still using Origen’s argument that God can be all in all only once evil has vanished from all.

The *apokatastasis*–*epektasis* connection at work still in the later *Cant* comes already to the fore in *An et res*. Macrina reveals that the cause of purification

40 Origen, *De principiis*, III 5,8.

41 1Tim 2.4.

42 1Jn 4.18.

43 *Cant* xv (GNO VI 466–467).

44 1Cor 15.28.

is God's attractive action on a soul, not God's will to punish; if a soul is covered with evil, its cleansing—the violent detaching of evil from it—will entail suffering as a side effect, but God's intent is the re-appropriation (οἰκείωσις) of the soul alienated by evil. Since the Godhead is infinite, its action of attracting rational creatures back to itself will have no end. In this infinite eschatological process Gregory's *epektasis* is at home.⁴⁵ This is already clear in *An et res*, where Macrina declares that every soul's τέλος is its infinite progress in the assimilation to God, in an increasing participation in the infinite divine Good; this tensional ideal owes much to Origen.⁴⁶ Rational creatures are receptacles of God's goods and expand *ad infinitum*, becoming larger and larger the more they participate in God's goods, without end.⁴⁷ For, while evil, as opposed to God-Good, is limited, God, whose nature is not susceptible of evil, is unlimited and infinite.⁴⁸

The Christological foundation of *apokatastasis* and *epektasis* for Gregory—which ultimately coincide—and its dependence on Origen are evidenced, e.g., by *Cant* XIII and XV, a section on apokatstasis in *Or cat*, a passage on Christ's cross in *Vit Moys*⁴⁹ and *Tunc et ipse*. In *Cant* XIII and XV those restored are said to make up Christ's body—an imagery applied to restoration by Origen⁵⁰—so restoration becomes incorporation in Christ. The world is aimed at the formation of Christ's body⁵¹ and will end once the number of humans is completed and Christ's body is built up and every part of it is made perfect. *Cant* 15 emphasises the Spirit's role in the unification of Christ's body, for which Jesus prays in Jn 17.21–23, a pivotal text also for Origen's notion of eschatological unity:

“That all may be one; as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, so may also they be one in us”. The bond of this unity is the glory [...] the Holy Spirit is called “Glory” [...]. Because Christ's human nature was glorified by the Spirit, the communication of the Spirit's glory has taken place on all that belongs to the same nature.⁵²

45 *An et res* (GNO III/3 71,11–74,2).

46 See my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima e la resurrezione*, Milano 2007, introductory essay.

47 *An et res* (GNO III/3 78,6–79,3).

48 *Ibidem*, 71,5–11.

49 *Vit Moys* (GNO VII/1 57,8–58,3).

50 See my “Clement's Notion of the Logos ‘All Things As One’ and its Developments in Origen and Nyssen”, in: Z. Pleše (ed.), *Alexandrian Personae*, Tübingen 2019.

51 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 384,18–21).

52 *Cant* XV (GNO VI 467,2–17).

Thus, in his last work Gregory kept the position expressed earlier in *Mort*:⁵³

There will be one and the same race, made up by all, when all of us will constitute the one body of Christ, formed with one and the same stamp, when God's image will shine forth in all to the same degree.

Gregory is clear that all single humans—not an abstract idea of humanity—will enter Christ's body. This is also manifest in *An et res*:⁵⁴ *apokatastasis* is “the realisation of the full totality through each single human” after purification. Gregory cannot conceive a corporate humanity including only some and not others. The eschatological incorporation in Christ's body means entering God's life, *θέωσις* realised at *apokatastasis*, when “the human being surpasses its nature by becoming, from mortal, immortal, from corruptible, incorruptible, from ephemeral, eternal [ἀίδιος], in sum, from human, God [θεός].”⁵⁵

In *Or cat* 26⁵⁶ Gregory is arguing that God's salvific plan joins justice and goodness (Origen supported the same theodicy against Marcionites and “Gnostics” developing his *apokatastasis* doctrine). God's justice is manifest in that the devil, humanity's deceiver, was deceived by Christ's human appearance; God's goodness is manifest in the purpose of the fact:

the devil plotted his deception aiming at the destruction of human nature, while Christ, who is just, good, and wise at the same time, used the intention of deception aiming at the salvation of the destroyed. So he benefited not only the the human being who had perished, but also the devil who had perpetrated that ruin against us [...] the approach of the divine power to death, corruption, darkness, and whatever product of evilness had grown upon the devil, the inventor of evil, produced the disappearance of what is against nature and therefore benefited the nature of the devil with purification, albeit the above-mentioned separation is painful. Not even the adversary himself would doubt that what happened is both just and salvific, in consideration of the benefit produced, as in a cauterisation.

Likewise, once, after the revolving of long ages, evil has been wiped out from nature [...] when there will be the restoration of those who now lie in evilness to their original state [ἡ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκατάστα-

53 *Mort* 20,74.1–3 (GNO IX, Lozza 74).

54 *An et res* (GNO III/3 115,19–20).

55 *Beat* (GNO VII/2 151).

56 *Or cat* 26 (GNO III/4 64–67).

σις τῶν νῦν ἐν κακίᾳ κειμένων], a unanimous thanksgiving will be elevated by all creation, those who have been punished in purification and those who needed not even a beginning of purification. These and such things are made possible by the great Mystery of God's inhumanation [τὸ μέγα μυστήριον τῆς θείας ἐνανθρωπήσεως]. For, thanks to all the respects in which Christ has mixed with humanity [...] having even gone as far as the trial of death, he accomplished all the tasks I mentioned, both liberating the human being from evilness and healing even the inventor of evilness [καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν τῆς κακίας εὐρετὴν ἰώμενος] (the devil).⁵⁷ For purification from illness, however painful, is the full healing of the sickness.

If restoration extends to the devil,⁵⁸ it will a fortiori embrace all humans. Restoration is here made dependent on Christ, his inhumanation and sacrificial death, which, as Origen stressed, was enough as to effect the restoration and salvation of all.⁵⁹

Origen was clear that, infinitely more than on human faith or justice, restoration and salvation depend on Christ's blood.⁶⁰ His sacrifice and resurrection bring about the restoration of all⁶¹ (reparationem mundi et innouationem totius creaturae, quae per resurrectionem Domini restituta est);⁶² "the whole creation was restored through the Lord's resurrection".⁶³ God disposed everything through Christ for the salvation of all creatures.⁶⁴ For Origen too, Christ heals even the devil:⁶⁵ he became enemy and death, and will be annihilated quātalis;⁶⁶ his hostile will shall perish, not his substance, which was created by God and is good. He will no longer be enemy and death, and will be saved because Christ, who created him, can also heal him: *Nihil Omnipotenti impossibile est*,

57 The devil was the initiator of evil and sin out of envy (φθόνος), both for Gregory, *Or cat* (GNO III/4 25,10 ff.), and for Origen, *Or.* 19,3.

58 Some will be saved after purification, but nobody will not be saved. So also *An et res* (GNO III/3 115,19–116,2): some are purified in this life, others in the next, and others need no purification.

59 E.g., Origen, *Commentarius in Epistulam ad Romanos*, IV 10; II 13,27: *Iesu sanguis [...] tam pretiosus fuit ut solus pro omnium redemptione sufficeret*. See my "The Universal and Eternal Validity of Jesus's High-Priestly Sacrifice", in: R. Bauckham (ed.), *A Cloud of Witnesses*, London 2008, 210–221.

60 *Or cat* 26 (GNO III/4 64–67).

61 Origen, *Commentarius in Epistulam ad Romanos*, IV 11,73–75.

62 *Ibidem*, IV 7,41–43.

63 *Ibidem*, IV 7,3.

64 Origen, *De principiis*, II 1,2.

65 *Ibidem*, III 6,5.

66 1Cor 15,26.

nec insanabile est aliquid Factori suo.⁶⁷ The same tenet is found later: “in souls there is no illness caused by evilness [κακία] that is impossible to cure for God-Logos, who is superior to all”.⁶⁸ Origen laid strong Christological foundations for *apokatastasis*.⁶⁹ Thanks to Christ’s work, “evil will be wiped away from the entire world” and “not even the tiniest sin will remain in the Father’s reign, and the word will be fulfilled that ‘God will be all in all’”.⁷⁰ Origen’s Christocentric *apokatastasis* is transparent in Origen, *Commentarii in Evangelium Joannis* xxxii 26–39, where it is grounded in many biblical passages.

That the restoration of all creatures to God will take place thanks to Christ-Logos’ healing power is highlighted still in Origen, *Commentarius in Epistulam ad Romanos*, ix 41,8, which joins 1 Cor 15.28 to Rm 14.11.⁷¹ “Once he has ‘handed the Kingdom to God the Father’, i.e. presented to God as an offer all, converted and reformed, and has performed the mystery of the reconciliation of the world [...] God’s word will be fulfilled: [...] ‘every knee will bend before Me, every tongue will glorify God’”. Glorification denotes voluntary submission; through Christ, God enacts universal restoration: “In unum finem putamus quod bonitas Dei per Christum suum universam revocet creaturam, subactis ac subditis etiam inimicis [...]. Subiectionis enim nomen [...] salutem quae a Christo est indicat subiectorum. Sicut et David dicebat: ‘Nonne Deo subiecta erit anima mea? Ab ipso enim salutare meum’”.⁷² The world is reconciled to God by Christ.⁷³ His eschatological reign will be salvific: “Christ reigns to save”.⁷⁴ Christ-Logos enables restoration and θεώσις: those “deified” are deified by the Logos.⁷⁵ In the end, mystically, all will become the Son, when they become one,

67 Origen was correcting Plato, who postulated “incurable” souls. See my *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, 389–391.

68 Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum* viii 72.

69 See my “Origen and Apokatastasis”, in: S. Kaczmarek—H. Pietras (eds.), *Origeniana Decima*, Leuven 2011, 649–670.

70 Origen, *Commentarii in Evangelium Joannis*, i 32.

71 Is 45.23.

72 Origen, *De principiis*, i 6,1, citing Ps 61.1, cited by Gregory too in *Tunc et Ipse*. That Christ performs the salvation of all through the submission of his humanity to God is claimed also in Origen, *De principiis*, iii 5,7, which Gregory takes over in *Tunc et Ipse*: sicut cum dicitur Filius Patri subiectus, perfecta universae creaturae restitutio declaratur, ita cum Filio Dei inimici dicuntur esse subiecti, subiectorum salus in eo intellegatur et reparatio perditorum. So Christ cannot submit to the Father as long as one *logikon* in his body has not converted (H. 2 Ps. 36).

73 Origen, *Commentarii in Evangelium Joannis*, vi 57,37.

74 Origen, *Homiliae in Lucam*, 30.

75 *Mart.* 25; *Or.* 27,13.

as Father and Son are.⁷⁶ Those who have reached God through Christ-Logos will have one activity: knowing God, that all may become one son, as now the Son alone knows the Father.⁷⁷ This is *θέωσις*.

Θέωσις comes after evil's opposition has ceased. Thus, Origen describes apokatasasis as peace; again, the pacifier is Christ, as indicated in the *Commentarium in Canticum*:

Cum ad perfectionem omnium ventum fuerit et sponsa ei perfecta—omnis dumtaxat rationalis creatura—iungetur, quia pacificavit per sanguinem suum non solum quae in terris sunt sed et quae in caelis [...] pacificatis omnibus Patrique subiectis, cum erit iam Deus omnia in omnibus, Solomon tantummodo, id est solum Pacificus, nominabitur.⁷⁸

Christ “was made all for the salvation of all”;⁷⁹ “through the incarnation Christ sought the salvation of all”.⁸⁰ Origen represents Christ-Wisdom as the instructor of *logika*, enabling their restoration to a condition of perfection which is not static, but anticipates Gregory's *epektasis*. For the enjoyment of the Good does not generate satiety, but an ever stronger desire for it and an increasing capacity to adhere to it: *innovatur semper agnitio secretorum arcanorumque revelatio per sapientiam Dei, non solum hominibus sed et angelis caelestibusque virtutibus*.⁸¹ Christ-Wisdom will reveal more and more to all *logika*, without end. Gregory gleaned inspiration for *epektasis* from Origen's *Commentarium in Canticum*; it is thus no accident that he developed his *epektasis* doctrine especially in *Cant*, on which the influence of the *Commentarium in Canticum* is so strong.

The Christocentric nature of Gregory's *apokatastasis* doctrine, shared with Origen, is also clear in *Vit Moys*,⁸² where the restoration of those in hell is declared to be performed by Christ's cross, prefigured by Moses, when he outstretched his hands and removed darkness:

Perhaps someone, since after three days of suffering in darkness even the Egyptians participated in light, could be induced to read in this passage the announcement of the restoration [*ἀποκατάστασιν*] we expect will

76 Origen, *Commentarii in Evangelium Joannis*, I 16.

77 *Ibidem*, I 16,92.

78 prol. 4,20.

79 *Ibidem*, 2,3.

80 Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum* III 9,8.

81 Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum* III 6,9.

82 *Vit Moys* II, 82 (GNO VII/1 57,8–58,3).

come to pass in the end [...] the restoration of those who had been condemned to Gehenna [ἐν Γεέννῃ καταδικασμένων]. Indeed, the “darkness that could be perceived” [...] is very similar [...] to the “outer darkness”. Both this and the outer darkness are dispelled when Moses outstretched his arms for the salvation of those who lay in darkness.

Interpolations and glosses to this passage aimed at denying that Gregory supported *apokatastasis*; some even attempted to delete the word ἀποκατάστασις.

The Christological foundation of *apokatastasis* is also evident in *Tunc et Ipse*. I demonstrated how here Gregory was closely inspired by Origen in his main argument and in minor exegetical details and citations, up to precise verbal echoes.⁸³ 1 Cor 15.28 was both Origen’s and Gregory’s favourite Biblical support for *apokatastasis*. Like Origen, Gregory interprets here Christ’s submission to the Father as the salvific submission of all humanity or all *logika*, i.e. Christ’s body. Gregory criticises “heretics” who used 1 Cor 15.28 to demonstrate the Son’s subordination to the Father, as Origen used it to refute “heretics,” subordinationists, proposing the same argument that Gregory took on. Gregory concludes his argument with Origen’s words: “humans’ submission to God means the salvation of those who submit”. Also, in *Or cat* 32, Christ, outstretching his arms on the cross, is said to have embraced and attracted all to himself:⁸⁴ his Cross is ἀνακεφαλαιώσις.⁸⁵ Its dimensions, i.e. its arms, show that “all heavenly and infernal realities and the extremes of all that exists are governed and kept together by the One who in the figure of the Cross manifested this great, ineffable power”.⁸⁶

The Christocentrism of Gregory’s *apokatastasis* is also proved by Christ’s role in the restoration of God’s image blurred by sin in humans: Christ, “to make you again an image of God, out of love for humanity, has become, he too, an image of the invisible God [...] that, thanks to him, you might be again configured to the impression of his archetypal beauty, to become again what you were in the beginning”.⁸⁷ Christ did so out of φιλανθρωπία, which has become Christ’s name.⁸⁸

83 Cf. I. Ramelli, “Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology in *Tunc et ipse*”, 445–478.

84 Jn 12.32.

85 *Trid spat* (GNO IX 1,298–303); *Eun* III/3 38–42 (GNO II 121–122).

86 *Eun* 3 (GNO II 121–122); cf. Eph 3.18.

87 *Perf* (GNO VIII/1 194–195).

88 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 107) based on Origen’s doctrine of Christ’s ἐπινοία.

3 Evil's Non-substantiality, Roots in Origen, God's Infinity and Evil's Finitude

The infinitude of God-Good-virtue against evil's finitude bears on Gregory's doctrines of *apokatastasis* and *epektasis*. This cluster of doctrines will be taken over by Evagrius. If neither Origen nor Gregory doubted the universality of salvation, this is due to their Christocentric vision of the restoration and their metaphysical pillar for *apokatastasis*: the eventual vanishing of evil, in tune with its ontological non-subsistence. Origen is clear on this:

The Good coincides with the One who Is. But evil and badness are opposed to Good and nonbeing to Being. Therefore, badness and evil are nonbeing [οὐκ ὄν].⁸⁹

This has momentous consequences at the soteriological and ethical levels. For choosing evil means becoming “nonbeing”: *Qui non est particeps Illius qui semper est, iste neque esse dicitur*.⁹⁰ But this is no substantial annihilation of God's creatures:⁹¹ Origen polemicised against Philo here.⁹² God “made all beings that they might exist, and what was made to exist cannot fail to exist. So, creatures can receive transformations [...] but the beings that God created in order for them to exist and endure cannot undergo a destruction in their substance”.⁹³ Unlike the material world, the logoi of God's creatures will never pass away, “since they are parts of the whole Logos, or species of the genus Logos, i.e. God-Logos”.⁹⁴

Precisely in the *Commentarium in Canticum*, on which Gregory drew for *Cant*, Origen declared that sins lack substance;⁹⁵ evil, no longer chosen by anyone, will vanish according to its non-subsistence: *decidentia de homine vitia [...] sibi abeunt et in semet ipsa resoluta evanescent atque in nihilum rediguntur*.⁹⁶ Evil will be progressively reduced, up to annihilation.⁹⁷ Since evil has no ontological subsistence, but derives from an ill will, its nonexistence in the

89 Origen, *Commentarii in Evangelium Joannis* II 13,96.

90 H. 5 Ps. 36,5.

91 *Substantialis interitus*, H. 2 Ps. 38,12.

92 See my “Philo's Doctrine of Apokatastasis”, *StudPhilo* 26 (2014) 29–55.

93 Origen, *De principiis* III 6,5.

94 Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum* V 22.

95 “Nullam esse substantiam peccatorum”, *Commentarium in Canticum* IV 1.13.

96 *Ibidem*.

97 “Sed ad nihilum redigantur [...] ad ultimum pereant”, Origen, *Homiliae in Iud* 1,3.

end means that “no one will do evil anymore: evil will rule no one”.⁹⁸ No more sinners will exist, because all will become just and sin will disappear: *Dominus pollicetur ut exterminet [...] peccatum, ita ut non iam sit peccator*.⁹⁹ Evil’s reduction to nonbeing depends on all souls’ rectification, as then no one will choose evil anymore: “many prophecies mysteriously speak of evil’s complete elimination [παντελοῦς ἀναιρέσεως] and every soul’s rectification”.¹⁰⁰ Souls will be cured by Christ-Logos, who is “more powerful than all their illnesses”, and “the end of all things will be the annihilation of evil”.¹⁰¹ “Evil will be entirely destroyed” and “annihilated to nonbeing”.¹⁰² “Evil is lack of good”¹⁰³ as of Being. According to Origen¹⁰⁴ and Plato,¹⁰⁵ evil is indefinite, ἀόριστον, like nonbeing, and dispersed in multiplicity, while virtue, like the Good-God-One, is simple.

Origen, as Nyssen after him, maintained that evil will be eliminated on the basis of 1 Cor 15.28, which describes the *telos* as God being “all in all.” Origen argued that, if God is to be in all, then evil, God’s opposite, will no longer be in any being.¹⁰⁶ Creatures will endure, but evil, like death, is no creature of God, so it has no being in itself. Its eventual nonexistence hinges on Christ’s inhumanation, death, and resurrection:

As a human he died, and his death not only constituted a model of death for piety, but also produced the principle and advancement of the destruction of evil and the devil, who ruled the whole earth.¹⁰⁷

Like Origen, Gregory too maintains evil’s non-substantiality and eventual non-existence still in *Cant*, as already in *Tunc et ipse* and elsewhere. In *Cant* XII he, like Origen, denies death’s and evil’s ontological positivity: “The centre of God’s plantation is Life, while death per se was not planted [...]. It is planted only by privation of life, when participation in the best substance weakens in a living being”. So Gregory can proclaim the final eviction of death and evil. This, according to him and Origen, is made possible by Christ: since Christ is God and human, in him “all humanity has been made connatural with the divinity”, i.e.

98 Origen, *Homiliae in Jes.* 8,5.

99 Origen, *Homilia* 3 in Ps. 36,1.

100 Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum* VIII 72.

101 ἀναιρεθῆναι ἐστὶν τὴν κακίαν, *ibidem*.

102 Origen, *Selecta in Psalmos* 56.

103 Origen, *De Principiis* II 9,2.

104 Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum* IV 63.

105 Plato, *Respublica* 445c6.

106 Origen, *De Principiis* III 6,2–3.

107 Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum* VII 17.

with the Good. In Christ, who has no sin, all evil has disappeared from humanity, and death, which came from sin, has disappeared too, thanks to Christ's resurrection. Since Christ assumed the whole humanity, the disappearance of sin and death in one human has a transitive effect on the rest. From Christ begins the Good's glorious advancement depicted in *Tunc et ipse*. This will take place during Christ's eschatological reign, until all enemies have submitted; the last, death, will be destroyed.¹⁰⁸ All enemies' submission means their liberation from evil. This will start from those closest to the Good and end with those farthest. Gregory's insistence on the order with which restoration will take place is similar to Origen's; both grounded it in 1 Cor 15.23–24, "each one in his order" in the τέλος. The Good, in its conquest, will reach even "the extreme limit of evil", having it disappear. So "nothing will remain opposed to the Good". Then "God's life will extend throughout all beings" and will have death vanish. This is "the culmination of our hope". After evil's abolition, "the whole lump of humanity, joined to its firstfruits [...] will receive exclusively the dominion of the Good".

Gregory, like Origen, draws a transitive equation between Christ's body and the Church and between the Church and all humanity in *Tunc et ipse* in support of *apokatastasis*. Here, like Origen, he links *apokatastasis* to unity. That "God will be all in all" means that all will be one with God, when all constitute "Christ's body" after purification. Not only all humanity and all *logika*, but even all creation will become "one body" and enjoy perfect harmony: "no being will remain outside the number of the saved",¹⁰⁹ not even the devil, as seen above; "no creature of God will fall out of God's Kingdom",¹¹⁰ because all creatures will be free from evil:

Every creature of God will return such as it was from the beginning [ἐξ ἀρχῆς], when it had not yet received evil.¹¹¹

Like Origen, from 1 Cor 15.28 Gregory deduces that, if God will be "all in all," evil will no longer exist in any being, since God cannot be found in evil.¹¹² Gregory takes over Origen's argument in Origen, *De principiis*, III 6,2–3 almost word for word. In Gregory's view, as in Origen's, evil will be annihilated, while God's creatures will be all saved; their submission will be "sovereignty, incorruptibility,

¹⁰⁸ 1 Cor 15.25–26.

¹⁰⁹ *Tunc et ipse* (GNO III/2 21).

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 14.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, 17.

and beatitude". Already in *An et res* he had used Origen's argument that God's eschatological being "all in all" implies the abolition of evil:

In this, Scripture seems to me to teach the complete disappearance of evil. For, if in all beings there will be God, clearly in them there will be no evil.¹¹³

This too reproduces exactly Origen's deduction of evil's eventual nonexistence from 1 Cor 15.28.¹¹⁴

Gregory bases *apokatastasis* on evil's non-subsistence also in *Inscr*:¹¹⁵ "evil is not from eternity [ἐξ αἰδίου] and will not subsist forever [εἰς αἰεί]. For what does not exist always [αἰεί] will not exist forever [εἰς αἰεί]": only God is eternal, according to him and Origen. Consistently, Gregory announces the "evil's complete elimination", ἀναίρεσις.

When evil is no more, neither will there be anyone conformed to it. So, once evilness has perished and its form has vanished into nonbeing, all will take up Christ's form, and one form will shine in all, that applied to human nature at the beginning.¹¹⁶

The motif of evil's eviction is joined to that of *apokatastasis* as restoration of God's image in each human—a description of *apokatastasis* used by Origen. The same argument surfaces in *Tunc et ipse*:

evil's nature is unstable and passes away [ἄστατός τε καὶ παροδική]. It did not come into existence in the beginning with creation [...] and will not continue to exist eternally with the beings that have ontological consistency. For the beings that derive their existence from the One who Is continue to exist eternally in Being; but if anything is out of the One who Is, its essence is not in Being. This, then, will pass away and disappear in due course, in the *apokatastasis* of all the universe to the Good. So, in that life which lies before us in hope there will remain no trace of evil, which now prevails over us.

¹¹³ *Tunc et ipse* (GNO III/2 77,12–14).

¹¹⁴ The thesis of *Tunc et ipse*, which Gregory drew from Origen, is condensed in *Ref Eun* 199–200 (GNO II 396–397): "Humans' subjection to God is salvation for those who submit, according to the prophet's saying that his soul is subject to God because from God comes salvation through submission". Even all biblical quotations, including Ps 61.2, are the same as in *Tunc et ipse*—and in Origen.

¹¹⁵ *Inscr* II 8 (GNO V 100,25; 101,3).

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 101,18–21.

Evil will no more exist, qua nonbeing vs. God-Being and finite vs. God-infinite (see below). Gregory opposes the immutability of divine will in the Good to the mutability of creatures' will, which "does not remain stable, not even in evil".¹¹⁷ As evil is finite, an infinite progression in it is impossible:

Therefore, after the extreme limit of evil [τὸ πέρας τῆς κακίας], there comes again the Good [...] even if we should have crossed the boundary of evilness [διεξελθόντες τὸν τῆς κακίας ὅρον] and reached the culmination [τῷ ἄκρῳ] of the shadow of sin, we shall return to live in the Light.

Also in his exegesis of Ps 59, Gregory opposes the destruction of evil-sin, which is no creature of God, to the continuing existence of God's creatures, in abidance by Origen's tenet that what God created will never be annihilated:

There will be no destruction of humans, that God's work may not be emptied by annihilation. Instead of human creatures, what will be destroyed and reduced to nonbeing is sin [...]. Once all evil has disappeared [...] no evilness will be left anywhere [...] evil, which now reigns over most people, will have been wiped out.

Also in *Trid spat*¹¹⁸ Gregory announces the eventual vanishing of evil and, as in *Tunc et ipse* and *Or cat* 26, has it hang on Christ. He refers the days between Christ's death and resurrection to his threefold victory over evil, in the man, the woman, and the serpent-devil, suggesting again the purification even of satan. On the third day death was completely eliminated.¹¹⁹ This anticipates the eviction of evil and death in *apokatastasis*.¹²⁰ Christ, assuming humanity and rising with it, brought again to Being humanity, which had fallen into nonbeing-evil. The clearest expression is *Vit Moys*:¹²¹ "Christ accepted to be created as we are, to bring back to being [τὸ ὄν] what had ended up out of being [ἔξω τοῦ ὄντος]", i.e. far from God. Likewise in *Eccl* 2:¹²² since humanity broke its communion with the angels, the great Shepherd of all *logika* left the angels to look for the lost sheep and "restore it among the existing beings [ἀποκαταστήσαι τοῖς οὄσι]" from nonbeing-evil.

¹¹⁷ *Op hom* XXI (PG 44 201–204).

¹¹⁸ *Trid spat* (GNO IX 285,7–286,12).

¹¹⁹ καταργεῖται, *ibidem*, 285,23.

¹²⁰ 1 Cor 15,23–28.

¹²¹ *Vit Moys* II, 175 (GNO VII/1 87).

¹²² *Eccl* II (GNO 305 10–13).

Already in *An et res* Gregory affirmed the final nonexistence of evil: like Origen, he regards Phil 2.9–10 as a prediction of the submission-salvation of all logika after purification, in a “universal harmony of all rational nature in Good”: “when finally, after long cycles of aeons, evil has disappeared, only Good will remain, and even demons will concordantly, unanimously admit Christ’s sovereignty”.¹²³ Gregory affirms the remedial nature of all eschatological punishments and purification as the premise of restoration. He describes resurrection as humanity’s restoration to its original state,¹²⁴ before evil: “human nature was something divine, before the human being acquired the impulse toward evil”.¹²⁵ The καθάρσιον πῦρ will burn away all evil: “The amount of evil in each one is the measure of the suffering [...] that painful flame will be applied for shorter or longer, depending on the amount of matter” to burn.¹²⁶ The same example is used in *Tunc et ipse*¹²⁷ (“when all evil mixed with the beings, like a sort of impurity, has been consumed by the fusion of the καθάρσιον πῦρ”), and elsewhere in *An et res* too:¹²⁸ what is handed to the αἰώνιον fire is what is contrary to the soul’s nature, which must be destroyed; then the fire will cease to burn. This idea was dear to Origen.¹²⁹ The aim of the cathartic process is the annihilation of evil.¹³⁰ Macrina appeals again to the ontological non-subsistence of evil:

Evil must necessarily be eliminated, absolutely, in every respect, once and for all, from all that is, and, since it is not [...], neither will it have to exist at all. For, as evil does not exist in its nature outside will, once each will has come to be in God, evil will be reduced to complete disappearance.¹³¹

Gregory echoes again Origen.¹³²

Gregory’s *epektasis*, as mentioned, is grounded in God’s infinity,¹³³ a tenet anticipated by Origen; both read it in Philo. For Origen “God’s greatness has

123 *An et res* (GNO III/3 51,12–14).

124 *Ibidem*, 112,18–19.

125 *Ibidem*, 113,4–5.

126 *Ibidem*, 74,3–9.

127 *Tunc et ipse* (GNO III/2 13,22–14,7).

128 *An et res* (GNO III/3 122,1–6).

129 E.g. Origen, *De Principiis* II 10,6; Origen, *Homiliae in Ieremiam* 16,6.

130 *An et res* (GNO III/3 77,12).

131 *Ibidem*, 74,14–75,1.

132 E.g. Origen, *Homiliae in Ieremiam* 1,15: “evil must subsist absolutely nowhere, in any respect”.

133 See E. Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Göttingen 1966; T. Alexopoulos, “Das unendliche Sichausstrecken (*Epektasis*) zum Guten bei Gregor von Nyssa

no limit [πέρας]; God's providence runs "from the infinite [ἐξ ἀπειρου] to the infinite [ἐπ' ἀπειρον] and further".¹³⁴ In surely authentic Greek texts, Origen declared God to be infinite,¹³⁵ "from infinities to infinity", ἐξ ἀπειρων ἐπ' ἀπειρον.¹³⁶ Only God-Good is infinite; evil is finite. For Gregory too, God has no limit or boundary,¹³⁷ from which Gregory draws Origen's consequence:¹³⁸ the divine Persons have the same οὐσία, which is infinite (ὁ λόγος τῆς οὐσίας is common: *Eun* I 496,1–10),¹³⁹ and are distinguished only in their individual substances, ὑποστάσεις.¹⁴⁰ Origen already used λόγος τῆς οὐσίας for God's common essence, as opposed to the three hypostases; Rufinus translated *ratio substantialis/substantiae*.¹⁴¹ From Origen, through Eusebius, the expression λόγος τῆς οὐσίας reached Constantine.¹⁴²

Evagrius, who was influenced by Nyssen more than generally assumed,¹⁴³ took on his tenet of evil's finitude and adventitiousness. He argued: "There was a time/state when evil did not exist, and there will come one when it will no more exist".¹⁴⁴ This came from Origen, who claimed that evil "is nonbeing [...] was not created through the Logos [...] did not exist in the beginning and will not exist forever",¹⁴⁵ "there was a state in which evil did not exist, and there will come one in which it will no more exist".¹⁴⁶ Evagrius' formula derives not only from Origen, but also from Nyssen, whose claim I already reported: "evil is not from eternity and will not subsist forever"; Gregory in turn reproduces Ori-

und Plotin", *ZAC* 10 (2006) 302–312; A. Geljon, "Divine Infinity in Gregory of Nyssa and Philo", *VChr* 59 (2005) 152–177; M. Weedman, "The Polemical Context of Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrine of Divine Infinity", *JES* 18 (2010) 81–104; O. Sferlea, "L'infinité divine chez Grégoire de Nysse", *VigChr* 67 (2013) 137–168.

134 Origen, *Selecta in Psalmos* 144.

135 τῷ ἀπείρῳ, Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum* III 77.

136 *Or.* 27,16.

137 πέρατι καὶ ὄρω, *Eun* I 410,4–411,1 (GNO I 146,10–20).

138 As I demonstrated in "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism", *VChr* 65 (2011) 21–49; "Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis", *HTR* 105 (2012) 302–350.

139 *Eun* I 496,1–10 (GNO I 169,20–170,3).

140 κοινωνεῖν κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν καὶ διηρῆσθαι κατὰ τὸν τῆς ὑποστάσεως λόγον, *Eun* I 413,5–6 (GNO I 147,10–11). See G. Maspero, *Essere e relazione*, Roma 2013, 148–149.

141 See my "Origen, Greek Philosophy". Origen used λόγος τῆς οὐσίας also for the body: Origen, *De Principiis* II 10,3; ap. Pamph. *Apol.* 130.

142 Ap. *Athan. Decr.* 40,13.

143 See my "Evagrius and Gregory", *GRBS* 53 (2013) 117–137; "Gregory Nyssen's and Evagrius's Biographical and Theological Relations", *Studia Patristica* 84 (2017) 165–231.

144 Evagrius Ponticus, *Kephalaia Gnostika*, I 40.

145 Origen, *Commentarii in Evangelium Joannis* II 13.

146 Origen, *Expositio in Proverbia* 5.

gen *Cto*. II 13. Also Evagrius' *Kephalaia Gnostika* I 1, "There is nothing opposed to the First Good, since it is Goodness in its essence; now, there is nothing opposed to the Essence", comes from Gregory: "Good is limited only by its opposite, but Good's nature is not susceptible of evil, so it will progress toward the unlimited and infinite".¹⁴⁷ Gregory posits God as ἄπειρον and evil as limited qua God's opposite.¹⁴⁸ He may be "correcting" Plotinus, who described absolute evil as ἄπειρον,¹⁴⁹ following Plato. Gregory realised that, if evil is ἄπειρον and the One-Good-God too is ἄπειρον, there is not enough opposition between the two, which risk telescoping into one another.

4 Love Terminology and Its Origenian Roots

Gregory shared Origen's position that the *Song of Songs* is about love, which he, like Origen, calls ἀγάπη and ἔρως. At the beginning, in *Cant* I,¹⁵⁰ Gregory declares that in the *Song of Songs* God, "who wants all humans to be saved and reach the knowledge of truth",¹⁵¹ reveals "the most perfect way of salvation: through ἀγάπη". Note the programmatic declaration of God's universally saving will, which is for Gregory and Origen a prop of *apokatastasis*.

The allegorical exegesis of the *Song of Songs* must be apophatic¹⁵² because the *Song* has love as its main topic, and love is God according to John—repeatedly quoted in *Cant*: "Call God "Mother" or "Love" and you will not err; for God is Love, as John stated".¹⁵³ But for Origen and Gregory God's essence is ungraspable; it can be known non-cognitively, by a mystical union with Christ-Logos symbolised by a love union.¹⁵⁴ Each reader is called to this ascent to Christ—the reversal of the fall caused by lack of love—hermeneutically necessary for the finding of meaning: for Origen, "the mind that has been purified and has surpassed all material things, so as to be certain of the contemplation of God, is divinised by the objects it contemplates".¹⁵⁵ Origen refers to Plato's *Sym-*

147 *An et res* (GNO III/3 71,9–11).

148 See above *Op hom* XXI (PG 44 201–204).

149 *Enn* I 8,9.

150 *Cant* I (GNO VI 15).

151 1Tim 2.4.

152 P.B. Decock, "Origen's Christian Approach to the *Song of Songs*", *Religion & Theology* 17 (2010) 13–25.

153 *Cant* I (GNO VI 214,10; cf. 120,17; 370,12).

154 See my "Harmony between *arkhē* and *telos* in Patristic Platonism", *JPT* 7 (2013) 1–49.

155 Origen, *Commentarii in Evangelium Joannis* XXII 27,338.

posium when stating that Greek philosophers already explored love's nature in dialogues, in banquets of discourses, finding correctly that "love's power is none other than that which leads the soul from earth to heaven's lofty heights and the highest beatitude can only be attained under the stimulus of love's desire". This is the path Origen treads, distinguishing passionate love from charity-love, and insisting that love must be oriented toward God. Loving Christ-Logos means attaining likeness to God:

Since God is ἀγάπη, and God's Son is ἀγάπη, He requires in us something like Him, that through this ἀγάπη in Christ Jesus, we may be allied to God-ἀγάπη in a sort of blood kinship through this name of ἀγάπη.¹⁵⁶

The God-intellect relation is expressed by Gregory in terms of ἀγάπη, and even ἔρω, already used by Origen in reference to divine love in a Christianisation of Plato's ἔρω. Scripture, Origen remarks, uses most frequently ἀγάπη, and sometimes ἔρω—only when there is no possibility of mistaking it for a passion; with this proviso, ἀγάπη and ἔρω in Scripture can be taken as interchangeable.¹⁵⁷ In reference to divine love, Gregory defines ἔρω as ἐπιτεταμένη, intense ἀγάπη,¹⁵⁸ expressing the soul's love for God: "Wisdom speaks clearly in *Proverbs* describing ἔρω of the divine Beauty. This love is irreproachable, a passion without passion oriented toward incorporeal objects",¹⁵⁹ "ἔρω for God derives from sentiments opposite to those which produce corporeal desire".¹⁶⁰

The weakening of ἀγάπη was for Origen the cause of the *logika's* fall, due to κόρος. At *apokatastasis*, according to him and Gregory, there will be no κόρος, since God, infinite Good, will never generate satiety. At the beginning, instead, God's love was not yet manifested in Christ, so Satan and Adam could fall.¹⁶¹ But in the end, after the manifestation of God's love, perfect love in each *logikon* will prevent new falls, since ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε (ἐκ)πίπτει.¹⁶² Gregory echoes

156 See J.C. King, *Origen on the Song of Songs*, Oxford 2005, 234–240.

157 Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum*, prol. 2,22–23,25,33. Rufinus renders ἀγάπη by *caritas vel dilectio*, and ἔρω by *cupido seu amor* (Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum*, prol. 2,20).

158 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 383,9).

159 *Cant I* (GNO VI 23,12).

160 *Ibidem*, 192,1.

161 To the objection that love could not impede Satan's fall, or Adam's, Origen replies that this fall took place before the manifestation of Christ's love: *antequam erga beneficia Filii Dei caritatis uinculis stringeretur* (Origen, *Commentarius in Epistulam ad Romanos* V 10,227–230).

162 "Quod sit quod in futuris saeculis teneat arbitrii libertatem ne rursum corrui in peccatum, breui nos sermone apostolus docet dicens: "Caritas numquam cadit" (1 Cor 13,8) [...].

Origen when he declares that “no creature of God will fall out [μηδενὸς ἀποπίπτοντος] of God’s Kingdom”.¹⁶³ Gregory and Origen saw in *apokatastasis* perfect, indefectible love. Sin, as lack of love, caused the initial fall, love produces the opposite movement of restoration: “Sin separated rational creatures from one another, but once the love of God has joined them again, they will utter again that hymn of praise”.¹⁶⁴

In his *Commentarium in Canticum*, followed by Gregory in *Cant*, Origen identified ἀγάπη with perfection: *summa perfectionis in caritate consistit: caritas nihil iniquitatis admittit*,¹⁶⁵ *in caritatis perfectione et omne mandatum restaurari dicitur et legis virtus prophetarumque pendere*.¹⁶⁶ Origen declares love’s soteriological value throughout his commentary: *salutari in eum* [Logos] *amore succendi*,¹⁶⁷ *salutare ab ipso vulnus accipiet et beato igne amoris eius ardebit*,¹⁶⁸ *praeexcellere gratiam caritatis* [...] *maiores omnium solamque esse caritatem quae numquam cadit*,¹⁶⁹ because ἡ ἀγάπη κολλᾷ ἡμᾶς τῷ Θεῷ.¹⁷⁰ This is why Origen deemed the end better than the beginning: in the end the *logika* will adhere to God not as a datum, but voluntarily, after rejecting evil, in endless love striving—anticipating Gregory’s *epektasis*—which will prevent further falls. Ἀγάπη prevented Christ’s *logikon* from falling and united it to God so perfectly that Good became its nature.¹⁷¹ Out of love some *logika* descend onto earth to assist the process of salvation.¹⁷² Restoration and liberation from evil, for Origen and Gregory, will be but the beginning of the infinite process of tension toward God: *neque vero putandum est finem esse beatitudinis, si a malis libermur: initium felicitatis est carere peccato*.¹⁷³ From that infinite ascent there will be no movement away, thanks to love’s gluing force that Origen describes after John 17: if the *logika*

Caritas omnem creaturam continebit a lapsu, tunc cum erit Deus omnia in omnibus [...] caritatis causas prior nobis dederit Deus” (Origen, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Romanos* V 10,195–226).

163 *Tunc et ipse* (GNO III/2 13–14).

164 *Inscr* I 9 (GNO V 65–69).

165 Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum* I 6.8.

166 *ibidem*, prol. 2,43.

167 *ibidem*, prol. 3,23.

168 *ibidem*, prol. 2,17.

169 *ibidem*, III 7,27.

170 Origen, *Homiliae in Ieremiam* 5,2.

171 Origen, *De Principiis* II 6,5.

172 Origen, *Commentarii in Evangelium Joannis* II 31,187–188; Origen, *De Principiis* II 9,7.

173 Origen, *Homiliae in Ezechielem* 1,12.

reach Christ's incomprehensible, ineffable true being, they will no longer walk or run, but will be, in a way, tied by the bonds of Christ's love, will adhere to it [...] one spirit with Christ, and in them the saying will be fulfilled, "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, and we are One, so may also they be one in Us".¹⁷⁴

The ardent love of God is light to the just and purifying fire to sinners: *Lux [...]* *iustis et ignis efficitur peccatoribus, ut consumat in iis omne quod in anima eorum corruptibilitatis et fragilitatis invenerit.*¹⁷⁵ Still in *Cant xv*,¹⁷⁶ as earlier in *An et res*, Gregory states that the soul "must purify itself from anything material, even any material thought, and change into what is intellectual and immaterial, a splendid image of the Archetype's Beauty".

Origen's and Gregory's exegesis of the *Song of Songs* influenced Ps. Dionysius' concept of love.¹⁷⁷ When Dionysius refers to "theologians", he seems to mean Origen's tradition, including Nyssen; Hierotheus—his revered teacher, whose "synoptic" teaching directed to initiated he is simply explicating in his own works¹⁷⁸—may point to Origen.¹⁷⁹ Hierotheus was superior to all other Christian sages after the apostles¹⁸⁰—this description echoes Didymus' and Jerome's definition of Origen. In *Divinis nominibus*, 2,9–10; 4,15–17 Dionysius quotes two excerpts, from Hierotheus' *Elements of Theology*—a pendant to Dionysius' own *Outlines of Theology*—and *Hymns on Love*. These ἑρωτικὸι ὕμνοι may refer to Origen's *Commentarium in Canticum*, which Dionysius knew, and the Θεολογικαὶ στοιχειώσεις to Origen's Περὶ Ἀρχῶν. Dionysius portrays Hierotheus as a sublime theologian and mystic, whose writings are a "second Scripture": this, again, fits Origen's inspired exegesis and Περὶ Ἀρχῶν, which was uniquely commented on by Didymus like a second Scripture. Δεύτερα λόγια might even hint at what Origen called δευτερώσεις, which included the *Song of Songs*. The first Hierothean excerpt treats Christ-Logos, who maintains the harmony of parts and whole, being above both, in terms close to Clement's and Origen's Logos theology. The second expounds the gradation of love, whose forms and

174 Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum* I 4,9.

175 *ibidem*, II 2,21.

176 *Cant xv* (GNO VI 439).

177 On love as *telos* in Dionysius: M. Nasta, "Figures de la transcendance chez Denys", in: Id., *Les êtres de paroles*, Bruxelles 2001, 189–220, esp. 190: "lorsque l'amour suprême habitera l'initié". To my documentation in *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, ch. on Dionysius, I add D. Cohen, *Formes théologiques et symbolisme sacré chez Ps. Denys*, Bruxelles 2010.

178 Ps-Dionysius, *Divinis nominibus*, 3,2–3.

179 See my *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, 694–700.

180 Ps-Dionysius, *Divinis nominibus*, 3,2.

powers are reduced to unity: the Neoplatonic motif culminates in the Christian principle of God-ἀγάπη. Love is a unifying force that moves all, from the Good to the last being and from this to the Good. This can be a reference to Origen's *Commentarium in Canticum*.

Dionysius derived his negative theology from Origen's and Nyssen's apophaticism.¹⁸¹ There are even verbal borrowings from Gregory¹⁸² and Origen.¹⁸³ His embrace of *apokatastasis*,¹⁸⁴ coinciding with ἐπιστροφή, ties him to Origen and Gregory, like the concept of *anastasis* as *apokatastasis* in *TM* 7,9 p. 130 H.-R. The “unifying power” through which God operates is the νοῦς: the νοερά δύναμις is indivisible, God's image, and tends to realise unity,¹⁸⁵ the intellect as unifying power realises the soul's unity by restoring it to its original state as God's image and likeness through the “reunion of our divisible alterities”, i.e. of all corporeal qualities and the soul's movements. This echoes the process explained by Nyssen in *An et res* and the intellect's unifying role in Evagrius. It may indeed be Origen's tradition that Dionysius calls “the theological tradition”.¹⁸⁶

In *Divinis nominibus* 4,14¹⁸⁷ the metaphysical movement of ἐπιστροφή (εἰς τὰγαθὸν ἐπιστρεφομένην), after πρόοδος (ἀγαθὴν πρόοδον), is identified with ἀποκατάστασις. Indeed, *apokatastasis* terminology is employed for ἐπιστροφή: God's love forms a circle that proceeds from the Good and returns to the Good; it “always proceeds, remains, and returns [ἀποκαθιστάμενος] to the same Good”. Dionysius ascribes this doctrine to Hierotheus:

These truths were explained, in his divinely inspired exegesis, by my illustrious and holy initiator in his *Hymns on Love*. It will be particularly appropriate to quote from these Hymns and thus provide my discourse on love with a sacred introduction, as it were: “Love, be it divine, angelic, intellectual, psychic or physical, should be understood as a unitive force that gathers together [...]”.

This inspired exegesis is likely Origen's *Commentarium in Canticum*: Dionysius seems to be paraphrasing its initial sections. So the ἐρωτικοὶ ὕμνοι may be

181 See I. Ramelli, “The Divine as Inaccessible Object of Knowledge in Ancient Platonism”, 167–188.

182 E.g. the neologism θεοπλάστια, Ps-Dionysius, *Divinis nominibus*, 2,9, from θεόπλαστος, *Ecccl* IV (GNO V 336).

183 E.g. μονάς καὶ ένας, Ps-Dionysius, *Divinis nominibus*, 1,4, from Origen, *De Principiis* 1 1,6.

184 See my *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, 694–721.

185 Ps-Dionysius, *Divinis nominibus*, 7,2.

186 Ps-Dionysius, *Divinis nominibus*, 1,4.

187 Ps-Dionysius, *Divinis nominibus*, 4,14 (p. 160,15).

Origen's *Commentarium in Canticum*, where Origen used ἔρωϛ—reworking its Platonic meaning—besides ἀγάπη to refer to God's love, and, like Hierotheus, conceived it as a unifying force. Thus,¹⁸⁸ he insisted that besides *carnalis amor/cupido* one should admit of *spiritalis amor* (ἔρωϛ) relevant to the *interior homo*. Dionysius likely meant Origen and Nyssen when remarking that “the theologians” treated ἀγάπη and ἔρωϛ as synonyms.¹⁸⁹ Thus, he ascribed ἔρωϛ to the Divinity.¹⁹⁰ A further clue: when Dionysius cites Ignatius to justify his application of ἔρωϛ to divine love in *Divinis nominibus*, 4,12, he is repeating Origen's *Commentarium in Canticum*: “Non ergo interest utrum amari [ἐρᾶσθαι] dicatur Deus aut diligī [ἀγαπᾶσθαι], nec puto quod culpari possit si quis Deum, sicut Iohannes caritatem [ἀγάπη], ita ipse amorem [ἔρωϛ] nominet. Denique memini aliquem sanctorum dixisse, Ignatium nomine, de Christo: Meus autem amor [ἔρωϛ] crucifixus est”.¹⁹¹ Not only the application of ἔρωϛ to God, but also *apokatastasis* can be ascribed to Origen as “Hierotheus”. Origen and Nyssen were among “the theologians” cited as authorities by Dionysius.

Bibliography

- Alexopoulos, T. “Das unendliche Sichausstrecken (*Epektasis*) zum Guten bei Gregor von Nyssa und Plotin”, *ZAC* 10 (2006) 302–312.
- Astell, A.—C.R. Cavadini, “The Song of Songs”, in: J.A. Lamm (eds.), *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*, Oxford 2013, 27–40.
- Cohen, D. *Formes théologiques et symbolisme sacré chez Ps. Denys*, Bruxelles 2010.
- Decock, P.B. “Origen's Christian Approach to the *Song of Songs*”, *Religion & Theology* 17 (2010) 13–25.
- Geljon, A. “Divine Infinity in Gregory of Nyssa and Philo”, *VChr* 59 (2005) 152–177.
- Grieser, H. “Olympias”, *RAC* 26 (2013) 125–131.
- King, J.C. *Origen on the Song of Songs*, Oxford 2005.
- Maspero, G. *Essere e relazione*, Roma 2013.
- Mühlenberg, E. *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Göttingen 1966.
- Nasta, M. “Figures de la transcendance chez Denys”, in: Id., *Les êtres de paroles*, Bruxelles 2001, 189–220.
- Patterson, P.A. *The Anthropomorphic Controversy*, Tübingen 2012.

188 E.g., in Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum*, prol. 2,16.

189 Ps-Dionysius, *Divinis nominibus*, 4,1.

190 Ps-Dionysius, *Divinis nominibus*, 4,10.

191 prol. 2,36.

- Placida, R. "La presenza di Origene nelle omelie sul *Cantico* di Gregorio di Nissa", *VetChr* 34 (1997) 33–49
- Ramelli, I. *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima e la resurrezione*, Milano 2007;
- Ramelli, I. "The Universal and Eternal Validity of Jesus's High-Priestly Sacrifice", in: R. Bauckham (ed.), *A Cloud of Witnesses*, London 2008, 210–221;
- Ramelli, I. "Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology in *Tunc et ipse*", in: V.H. Drecoll—M. Berghaus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarianism*, Leiden 2011, 445–478;
- Ramelli, I. "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism", *VChr* 65 (2011) 21–49;
- Ramelli, I. "Origen and Apokatastasis", in: S. Kaczmarek—H. Pietras (eds.), *Origeniana Decima*, Leuven 2011, 649–670;
- Ramelli, I. "The Dialogue of Adamantius. Part One", in: A. Brent—M. Vinzent (eds.), *Studia Patristica* LII, Leuven 2012, 71–98;
- Ramelli, I. "Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis", *HTR* 105 (2012) 302–350;
- Ramelli, I. *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, Leiden 2013;
- Ramelli, I. "Evagrius and Gregory", *GRBS* 53 (2013) 117–137;
- Ramelli, I. "Harmony between *arkhē* and *telos* in Patristic Platonism", *JPT* 7 (2013) 1–49.
- Ramelli, I. "The Divine as Inaccessible Object of Knowledge in Ancient Platonism", *JHI* 75 (2014) 167–188;
- Ramelli, I. "Οἰκεῖωσις in Gregory's Theology", in: J. Leemans—M. Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium III*, Leiden 2014, 643–659;
- Ramelli, I. "Clement's Notion of the Logos 'All Things As One' and its Developments in Origen and Nyssen", in: Z. Pleše (ed.), *Alexandrian Personae*, Tübingen 2019.
- Ramelli, I. "The Reception of Origen's Thought in Western Theological and Philosophical Traditions", in: A.-C. Jacobsen, *Origeniana undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought. Papers of the 11th International Origen Congress, Aarhus University, 26–31 August 2013*, BETL 279, Leuven 2016, 443–467;
- Ramelli, I. "Gregory Nyssen's and Evagrius's Biographical and Theological Relations", *Studia Patristica* 84 (2017) 165–231;
- Sferlea, O. "L'usage de l'Écriture dans la réflexion sur l'infinité divine et sur le progrès spirituel sans fin chez Grégoire", in: M. Cassin—H. Grélier (eds.), *Grégoire de Nysse: la Bible dans la construction de son discours*, Paris 2008, 41–54;
- Sferlea, O. "L'infinité divine chez Grégoire de Nysse", *VigChr* 67 (2013) 137–168.
- Weedman, M. "The Polemical Context of Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrine of Divine Infinity", *J ECS* 18 (2010) 81–104.

Becoming Men, Not Stones: *Epektasis* in Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the Song of Songs**

J. Warren Smith

The theme of *epektasis*, so integral to Gregory of Nyssa's theology, finds its fullest expression in his *Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum*. In these homilies he offers a developed account of the implications his theology of Divine infinity has on his understanding of the soul's participation in God. The theological foundation for his theory of *epektasis* he had articulated as early *Contra Eunomium*; the anthropological implications required more time to be worked out. This was precisely the central task of his mystagogical analysis of the *Song* written late in his episcopacy. Not surprisingly, therefore, the theme is ubiquitous in the homilies. To illustrate how *epektasis* shaped Gregory's mature doctrine of human nature, this paper will focus primarily on a single passage in the fifth homily—one among many that might be used—to probe his mature conception of human perfection.

Early in the fifth homily he analyzes the path or order of revelation (ἀκολουθία) by which the Word reveals himself to the soul. The Bride is being drawn by the Bridegroom's voice speaking to her from the garden's latticework wall and receives, not assurance (βεβαίωσιν) of our knowledge of the Bridegroom's nature, but a plausible conviction (στοχασμὸν) sufficient to arouse her desire for her Beloved.¹ The Bridegroom's voice is a figure of Christ's word spoken through the prophets and the lattice wall is the Torah that prepares her for the perfect illumination that will come at the Incarnation.² The Law and the prophets announce the coming of the Bridegroom in the words of the Ct 2.10–11, "Rise up, come my close one, my fair one, my dove. For behold the winter is past". Gregory interprets the Song's image of winter this way,

* I am grateful for the invitation from Giulio Maspero, Miguel Brugarolas and Ilaria Vigorelli to address the subject of *epektasis* in Gregory's *In Canticum Canticorum*. Since the contours of Gregory's theory of *epektasis*, as laid out by Jean Daniélou, are largely accepted among Nyssen scholars, the object of this paper is to illustrate how Gregory articulates in the homilies the anthropological foundation of *epektasis*. I am grateful as well to John Behr, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Judith Heyhoe for reading drafts and offering helpful suggestions.

1 *Cant V* (GNO VI 147; tr. Norris 139).

2 *Cant V* (GNO VI 144–145; tr. Norris 157–159).

There was a time when humanity was frozen stiff (πεπήγει) by the icy cold (κρυμῶ) of idolatry because the changeable nature of human beings had been altered to conform to that of unchangeable idols (πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀκινήτων σεβασμάτων). For it is written: “Those who make them [idols] are like them; so are all who believe in them” (Ps 113.16). And what happened back there was equitable. For just as those who look upon the true Godhead take to themselves the distinct qualities (τὰ ἰδιώματα) of the divine nature, so too the person who is devoted to the vanity of idols is transformed into the stone he looks upon and becomes something other than human.³

Here Gregory maps the soul’s ascent to God onto the ἀκολουθία of salvation history. The winter that has past is the Gentile Church’s pagan past characterized chiefly by the worship of idolatry; thus, Gregory uses the occasion to describe the corrupting and deforming effects of idolatry upon human nature. He does this by borrowing a classic Christian idea in anti-pagan polemics: idolatry reforms the worshipper in the image of idol. Even as the Christian is divinized by becoming a participant in the nature of the God whom she worships, the soul of the idolater becomes like the idol he worships.

This point is made clear by Clement of Alexandria in his *Protreptikos*, where he interprets John the Baptist’s warning to the Pharisees—“God from these stones is able to raise up children to Abraham” (Lk 3.8)—as referring to the Gentiles who worship stone idols. Here, the Gentiles have lost their capacity for wisdom and right understanding proper to creatures made in the image of the Logos not just because idolatry has turned them into beasts dominated by vicious passions, but more importantly because “[t]he unwise (ἄφρονες) are stone and wood; indeed the person baptized in ignorance (ἀνοία βεβαπτισμένος) is more senseless (ἀναισθητότερος) than stones”. Clement explains that because the Gentiles have worshipped stone idols, they think of God in material terms. As a result, their ossified thinking fails to confer immortality upon the soul, and the lifelessness inscribed upon the mind by the idol’s material substance is a form of decadence unto death. The stony ignorance of the idolater is a present image of the stone-cold corpse he will soon become.

However, while Clement emphasizes the ossifying effects of worshipping idols—they can harden their worshippers—he also notes the idols’ transitory material substance—they will not endure. This is important to keep in mind, especially with regard to *Contra Gentiles* and *De Incarnatione* where Athanasius expands upon Clement’s reasoning. Contemplation of God allows humanity to partake of God’s eternal nature, which gives stability to our naturally

3 *Cant V* (GNO VI 147; tr. Norris 159–161).

unstable natures, but when we turn from contemplating God to worshipping idols, our minds cease to partake of God's eternal Being. No longer sharing God's stasis, we return to the instability inherent in the created material nature we share with the idol. Consequently, the idolater is remade in the image of that which is subject to decay and corruption, falling away from Being toward the non-being of death.⁴

Gregory follows the logic of Clement and Athanasius to a point.⁵ While Athanasius sees the death and decay inherent in idols as exacerbating human instability, and Clement notes the unchangeableness of idols as tending to turn the idolater's soul into stone—frozen and lifeless as in winter and insensible to eternal life—Gregory combines and *reorders* their tropes: thus corruption is not transience and instability but stasis and immutability (πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀκινήτων σεβασμάτων φύσιν).⁶ Why does he do this? In this paper, I will argue that Gregory's idiosyncratic depiction of idolatry is intelligible only within the context of his theory of *epektasis* and the theological anthropology that is its foundation. For Gregory, God paradoxically liberates humanity from sin by transforming the primary *condition* of humanity's fall—that is, creaturely instability and mutability—into the *means* of our deliverance and perfection. In other words, the worship of idols is, for Gregory, the test case that reveals the logic of his *epektasis*. To explain this thesis, we need to attend to two questions raised by the fifth homily. First, why does Gregory break with Clement and Athanasius and view the transformation of humanity from being mutable to being unchangeable as a corruption of our nature? Second, in what sense does idolatry render human nature unchanging?

1 Humanity's Eternal Becoming

In the fifth homily, Gregory describes the effects of idolatry by using the two images of frozen water and the paralytic in Mt 9 whose friends carry him on a

4 See in *Contra Gentes* 2.1–2 and then 8.1–4 for Athanasius' discussion of the relationship of idolatry and humanity's fall into non-being. Although idolatry is the result of our forgetfulness of God due to a failure to cleave to God in contemplation, the effects are circular. Cf. *De Incarnatione Verbi* 3 and 6.

5 Gregory is not simply differing with Clement and Athanasius by using the trope to express a different aspect of human nature. As Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco rightly argues in "Epektasis", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 268, Gregory, in conceiving of perfection as perpetual progress, is parting ways with the whole Greek tradition that conceived of perfection as the attainment of an end or term.

6 *Cant v* (GNO VI 147; tr. Norris 159).

stretcher to Jesus to be healed. The water of a spring, which is ever in motion following its natural course to the sea, ceases its movement when frozen in winter.⁷ Similarly, the paralytic, unable to walk, lacks a capacity essential for customary ideas of human flourishing.⁸ Consequently, deprived of their mobility, the frozen spring and the paralytic are unable to attain their *telos*, to be what they were created to be and to do. Becoming unchangeable is, for Gregory, a fundamental corruption of human nature because it is contrary to the very dynamic movement of the soul that allows humanity to grow in the likeness of God. Indeed, man's very perfection is found, not in resting, but in being in motion. The pagan idolater's inhuman *stasis* is a foil for the Bride's perfected humanity characterized by her *unceasing movement* in pursuit of her Bridegroom.

Commenting in his opening homily on Ct 1.4, "We will run after you, toward the fragrance of your perfumed ointments", Gregory first invokes Phil 3.13 and the issue of *epektasis*. He contrasts those who declare, "We will run after you" with another type of runner he calls the "more perfect soul" (τελειοτέρα)—represented by the "young maidens" mentioned in Ct 1.3, who have "loved the Bridegroom's fragrance more than all spices". They are those who have been faithful to the first commandment to love the Lord with their entire being and are practiced in virtue through participation "in the mysteries of the inner divine chamber".⁹ By running after "the fragrance of the perfumed ointment", which is the divine nature itself, the young maidens do not suffer the weakness or lethargy of childhood or old age. Stretching out with greater zeal toward what lies ahead, they "have already attained the goal" (ἤδη τυγχάνει τοῦ σκοποῦ).¹⁰ By contrast, those who have promised that they will run (δραμούμεθα) but have not yet done so represent the immature (αἱ νεάζουσα)—those who perhaps have postponed baptism or who are catechumens. What is curious is that Gregory here speaks only of two groups: those that who *will* run and those who *have* already attained the goal. There is no third, middle group: those who are running but have not attained the goal. Why not?

One possible answer is that Gregory negates any real distinction between running the course and attaining the goal to make the point that the running will never stop, even for the τελειοτέρα. The young maidens have attained their

7 Cant V (GNO VI 147–148; tr. Norris 161.7–9). For Gregory's use of the image of the flowing stream see Cant IX (GNO VI 276) and *Virg* VI/1, 18–20 (GNO VIII/1 279) and *Virg* VI/1, 42–46 (GNO VIII/1 280); see also M. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence*, Oxford 2004, 36.

8 Cant V (GNO VI 149; tr. Norris 161–163).

9 Cant I (GNO VI 38–39; tr. Norris 41).

10 Cant I (GNO VI 39–40; tr. Norris 43).

goal by being judged worthy of admission to King's treasure house, but even while there, as Gregory notes, their legs do not rest:

This same soul, empowered by its success in slipping through to the interior of what thought cannot articulate, cries out her request that her running not be only in the entryway of the Good but that by the first fruits of the Spirit—of which she is made worthy by the first gift of grace, that is by a kiss—she may come to the inner shrine of paradise and search “the depths of God”.¹¹

If, as Richard Norris has suggested, the kiss is baptism, then the “more perfect” represented by young maiden who has received the kiss of grace are the newly baptized.¹² Gregory interprets the cry to enter the inner shrine as the hopeful groaning for the vision of God, which Paul calls the first fruit of the Spirit,¹³ and the maiden's running prepares and makes her worthy of entry into the “inner shrine of paradise”. The knowledge she seeks is nothing short of Paul's vision in the third heaven—¹⁴ to “see invisible things and hear unspeakable words”.¹⁵

Is the running of the more perfect soul an image for *epektasis*, the unceasing movement into God's infinite being? In other words, does the running continue within “the inner shrine of paradise” or once in the “inner shrine” does the soul at last rest in the presence of the ineffable God? Gregory is not explicit, but he hints at the former, especially as the mature soul asks that the running not cease at the entryway. The metaphor of running here suggests the soul's pursuit of virtue,¹⁶ but Gregory uses it also to speak of the soul's quest for the Divine mystery that always lies just beyond our present glimpse.

11 *Cant* 1 (GNO VI 40; tr. Norris 43).

12 Tr. Norris 43, n. 27.

13 Gregory does not explicitly identify the “first fruits of the Spirit” by which the more perfect soul enters the inner chamber. Rather the allusion is to Rm 8.23 where Paul says that those who have received the first fruits of the Spirit in baptism, groan with all creation as we wait in hope for the redemption of our bodies. Even as Paul explicitly contrasts hope with vision (“Who hopes for what he sees”, 8.24), so too the more perfect soul desires the vision of the inner chamber.

14 2Cor 12.2–4

15 *Cant* 1 (GNO VI 40; tr. Norris 43).

16 Commenting on Ct 1.9, “I have likened you, my close one, to my horse among the chariots of Pharaoh” Gregory interprets the horse to be the invisible angelic host that fought against Pharaoh's chariots (*Cant* III [GNO VI 74]). He concludes that when the *Song* speaks of the Bride as a horse it is comparing her to God's angelic cavalry since “by running the race of virtue [she] is likened to that body of horse that destroyed the Egyptian force [i.e. vice]” (*Cant* III [GNO VI 75]).

The employment of running as an image of *epektasis* is also found in homily four where Gregory invokes Phil 3.21 to interpret Ct 2.4–5 “Bring me into the house of wine, set love in order upon me. Strengthen me with perfumes [...]”. Clearly, for Gregory, the wine house is a figure of significance. Reading Ct 2.4–5 with Is 63.2—“Why is thy apparel red, and thy garments like his that treads in the wine press?”—he interprets the wine vats to be the source of red pigment of the Bridegroom’s garments; thus the house of wine and its vats are construed as the mysterious *source* of the wine. Although Gregory admits that the figural significance of every element of the passage cannot be spelled out, he sees the wine house as representing the Christological mystery that is the source of the deeper knowledge of God sought by soul; it is the place of the Father and source of the Son, who offers the way into it.

Gregory’s description of the bride’s drinking—with an insatiable desire—from the vats overflowing with “sweet wine” bears a resemblance to the image of the fountain of paradise that represents the source of the Bridegroom’s divinity. But although he here employs the trope of the soul’s bottomless thirst for God, Gregory nevertheless returns to the imagery of running:

O how the soul—rightly likened to a mare—runs the divine race as with frequent, urgent leaps she stretches out toward that which lies ahead and is not turned back. How much she has already attained. May she thirst even more. And such is the vehemence of her thirst that the cup of wisdom does not satisfy her.¹⁷

Gregory mixes his metaphors to emphasize the nature of the desire for God that is the source of the soul’s *epektasis*. The Pauline language of “stretching out toward what lies ahead” is suggestive of a race horse with legs extended before her as she pounds the sod propelling herself ever forward, even though Gregory makes no mention of a finish line or even of “the prize of our upward calling” that Paul names as the object of stretching forward. Instead, the running is both the source of thirst and an image of the soul’s ravenous consumption of the sweet wine of Divine wisdom. Here the imagery of *epektasis* is married to the insatiable thirst of the Bride as she drinks directly from a bottomless vat overflowing with the wine of sweet divinity. Just as the desire to run urges the racing mare forwards, our desire to drink propels us towards God by an ever-expanding desire for his goodness. Thus two central features of *epektasis* are combined: thirst—aroused by God’s self-disclosure—

17 Cant IV (GNO VI 119; tr. Norris 133).

and running—necessitated by the soul's urgency—to direct us into a participatory movement into God.¹⁸

The Song's ubiquitous images of ceaseless running and thirsting are, for Gregory, apt images of the perfection of human nature in its infinite perfectibility because they speak of the *eternal* character of God's creative *energeia*.¹⁹ Gregory begins the sixth homily by describing the creation of intelligible beings. Although Gregory categorizes God metaphysically as intelligible, God is uncreated and so God's Being is eternal and self-sufficient. Consequently, God is unchanging, eternally the same without any loss that would diminish God's perfection.²⁰ By contrast, created intelligible realities, which include the *paradeigmata*, angels, and the rational human soul, derive their nature through participation in an external, transcendent source, namely God. Gregory's primary metaphysical division is the Biblical distinction between Creator and creatures, the uncreated One and the created many. The eternal, self-sufficient God is Being itself. The created intellectual natures, however, he describes as an eternal becoming through their participation in God. He writes,

The second [order of intelligible natures], however, has been brought into existence by an act of creation (κτίσεως). It looks eternally upon the First Cause (πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον) of all things that are and is preserved in every respect in the good by its participation in what transcends it. It is also in a certain fashion, *always being created* (πάντοτε κτίζεται) as it is changed for the better by increasing in goodness (ἐν τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἐπαυξήσεως). For this reason, no end point (πέρας) can be conceived for it either, and its growth toward the better is not confined by any limit, but the good that is given at any particular time is always a starting point for something more and better, even though it already appears to be as great and as complete as possible. In its case, too, then the Apostle's word is confirmed, because it stretches forward in forgetfulness of things that have already been accomplished.²¹

18 Gregory returns to the image of thirsting in the eighth homily to describe the cause and the consequence of participation in God, "The wellspring of good things draws the thirsty to itself [...] he issues a continuing invitation to thirst, to drink, and to be impelled toward him [...] the tasting becomes, as it were, an invitation to partake of yet more. Thus the invitation that has been offered to come to him [...] ever and again draws us to better things [...]" *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 248–249; tr. Norris 261).

19 Eternal here does not mean "timeless" but "unceasing".

20 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 174; tr. Norris 185).

21 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 174; tr. Norris 185–187).

Here Gregory announces his theory of eternal creation, which is central to the dynamics of *epektasis*. The eternal process of creation is an unending cycle of formation and re-formation through the Creator's communication of form to the intellectual natures. Rational creatures derive their existence through a kind of contemplative participation—what he calls “eternally looking upon the First Cause”. The intelligible nature is created in the sense that it receives the form of that upon which its intellectual gaze is focused. Since the First Cause upon which it gazes is infinite, the First Cause is incapable of being grasped in a single moment of apprehension but is revealed to the intellect progressively. The series of images or forms of God's goodness that the soul receives, therefore, is itself infinite. Consequently, the intellectual nature is ever being refashioned into more perfect resemblances to God's beauty as they participate in the limitless goodness of their Creator from whom they derive their form and being.²² Thus, through this understanding of intellectual participation as God's means of creating intellectual beings, Gregory establishes the principle that change and becoming are simply inherent to the created nature of intelligible being.²³ Consequently, the perfection of rational natures

22 Gregory, *Cant VI* (GNO VI 174), explains the progressive betterment of creation by interpreting Paul's phrase “forgetting the things that lie behind” to mean that each new vision that is superior to what has preceded naturally arrests the intellect, captivating its desire for what is better so that it becomes forgetful of what was. Although Gregory does not here quote 1 Cor 13.11, “When I was a child I thought as a child [...] when I became a man, I gave up childish ways”, its logic obtains. As we mature and our thinking about the world becomes more rich and textured, we lose interest in the things that intrigued and occupied us as children.

23 This notion of eternal creation appears to contradict Gregory's earlier claim in *Homily 2*, “Humanity came into existence at the beginning lacking not a single one of the divine goods. Its task was simply to “guard” the good things, not to acquire them. But the treachery of the hostile powers stripped humanity of what belonged to it [...]” (*Cant II* [GNO VI 54; tr. Norris 59–61]). Such a statement, if taken literally, would mean that at creation humanity possessed the infinite goods of God and so was itself infinite in virtue. If Gregory held this view at the beginning of the homilies, he seems to have abandoned it quickly and adopted a radically different view, given what follows. It is more likely that Gregory here is articulating the view he put forward in *De Hominis Opificio* IV. After enumerating the qualities (e.g., virtue, immortality, and righteousness) with which human nature is endowed—at least at the level of God's intention—he concludes that human nature is “perfectly like to the beauty of its archetype in all that belongs to its dignity”. In chapter five, Gregory lists qualities that can be divided between the structural image (e.g. word, mind, the power of apprehension) and the moral likeness (e.g., love, purity, impassibility, blessedness, and freedom from evil). The former are the mechanism by which the soul participates in God and the latter are the qualities acquired through participation in God. More than likely, in *Homily 2* Gregory simply means that humanity in the beginning was perfect in the sense of being without defect.

that participate in the Divine necessarily entails eternal growth in God's goodness.²⁴

Gregory articulates precisely this view of progressive participation at the beginning of the eighth homily. Here he argues that Paul's claim in Phil 3.13 "I do not consider that I have made it [i.e. perfection] my own [...]" arises out of Paul's experience of his "mystical initiation into paradise" described in 2 Cor 12. When Paul experienced the "ineffable audition of the mysteries of paradise", Gregory argues, the apostle discovered the limitless wonder of the Godhead. Out of that experience, he realized that even this mystical vision was not a definitive comprehension of God. Far from it, the mystical encounter offered only a partial apprehension of God's goodness that aroused his desire for God and drove him ever higher.²⁵ Thus Gregory concludes,

In this way, as I see it, [Paul] teaches us, on the one hand, that what is ever and again discovered of that blessed nature that is the Good is something great but, on the other hand, that what lies beyond what is grasped at any particular point is infinitely greater (εἰς τὸ διηνεχές γίνεταί); and during the entire eternity of the ages (ἐν πάσῃ τῇ τῶν αἰώνων αἰδιότητι) this becomes the case for the person who participates in the Good, since those who participate in it receive increase and growth in that encounter in that they encounter ever greater and better things (διὰ τῶν αἰ μείζονων τῆς ἐπαυξήσεως). For according to the Master's true statement, the person who is pure in heart sees God, ever grasping in the mind as much as he is able to take in, in proportion to his capacity. Nevertheless, the infinite (ἄοριστον) and uncircumscribed (ἀπερίληπτον) nature of the Godhead remains beyond all comprehension (καταλήψεως).²⁶

Here we see the paradoxical dialectic between the kataphatic and the apophatic that is at the heart of progressive participation. Despite Paul's explicit denial that he has attained perfection,²⁷ Gregory views the apostle as perfect since he has attained that purity of heart that Christ says is necessary in order to see God—²⁸ the vision he received when he was taken up into the third heaven.²⁹

24 For an account of the appropriation of this view of perpetual progress in the later tradition, see P.M. Blowers, "Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of 'Perpetual Progress'", *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992) 151–171.

25 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 245; tr. Norris 257–259).

26 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 246; tr. Norris 259).

27 Phil 3.12.

28 Mt 5.8.

29 2Cor 12.2.

Although Gregory uses the language of “seeing God” taken from Mt 5.8, he is quick to stress the partial character of the mind’s vision of the infinite God. Drawing on 1Cor 2.9, he qualifies the extent of the vision the pure in heart receive, “concerning the nature of the inexhaustible goods, when [the apostle] said ‘eye has not seen’ that Good even if it be ever gazing upon it [he meant that one] does not see as much as is there, but only as much as the eye is capable of taking in”.³⁰ To express the more nebulous nature of the intellect’s vision, Gregory alternates between verbs of “seeing” (ὁρᾶν) and verbs of “discovering” (εὐρίσκειν) or “grasping” (καταλαμβάνειν). Gregory speaks of these moments of apprehension as discrete points of experience with discrete qualities of God’s goodness that are in proportion to the mind’s capacity—a capacity that varies based on the mind’s likeness to God. At the same time, the pure mind, like Paul’s, apprehends that God is infinite and therefore beyond our comprehension (καταλήψις) and so discovers that there is no limit to the magnificence of God’s glory.³¹ Consequently, the mind is aware that no single discrete experience of God—or even the sum of all our experiences—gives us comprehensive knowledge of God. Each successive experience of God—whether mystical, prayerful, or exegetical—re-forms the mind with new and greater knowledge of God, and thus, the mind’s eternal “increase and growth” follow upon the eternal God’s progressive self-disclosure of his infinite goodness. In this way, God eternally creates rational creatures anew by eternally revealing himself as ever new.³² Such eternal becoming Gregory expresses in his paraphrase of Ps 91, “In the entire eternity of the unending age, the person who bends his course toward you [God] is *always becoming* (γίνεται αἰεὶ) greater and higher than he is [now] [...]”³³ Here Gregory draws the absolute metaphysical boundary between God and creatures. God is eternal and self-subsistent Being, immutable and infinite; humanity forever belongs to the realm of becoming, creatures eternally created, progressively growing in Godlikeness. The permanence of the gap

30 Cant VIII (GNO VI 247; tr. Norris 259). The same holds true, he goes on to say, for the aural disclosure of the Word.

31 Ps 145. The difference between καταλαμβάνειν and καταλήψις, each of which Norris translates as “grasping”, may be understood as the difference between “apprehending” and “comprehending”. The latter suggests a firm conceptual grasp with nearly full understanding whereas the former suggests a vague or hazy perception of something one sees only partially. If such apprehension suggests a mental “grasp”, it is not a firm but a tentative grasp, like that of those feeling around for a piece of furniture to steady themselves as they make their way through a pitch black room. You know the piece of furniture is there but you have only a vague sense that it is a chair and not a table.

32 Cant XI (GNO VI 321–322; tr. Norris 339).

33 Cant VIII (GNO VI 246–247; tr. Norris 259).

between God's infinite and eternal Being and humanity's eternal becoming is the central ontological claim on which the doctrine of *epektasis* hangs.³⁴

2 Eternal Becoming as Stasis

Were Gregory's account of man's unceasing movement to lack any notion of rest or *stasis*, he would be a complete outlier in the Christian tradition. Therefore, throughout the homilies on the *Canticle*, Gregory speaks of rest or immutability as part of the soul's experience of perfection. Yet, he qualifies the nature of that rest by describing the soul's repose within the context of its eternal re-formation through participation in God. Immutability proper to human perfection resembles that paradigm of the created rational nature, angels. The angelic host possesses an "eternally abiding nature" because they are steadfastly and immovably fixed in their love and worship of God.³⁵ Yet even angelic immutability is an eternal progress toward what is better. To the disciples of the Bride who have received the promise that at the resurrection we shall be made like the angels, Gregory says, the Bride's blessedness encourages her followers "to look to the [angelic] powers, imitating the angelic purity by its impassibility. For when love is thus being wakened and stirred—which means being lifted up and *always increasing* through progress toward what is better—the good will of God is fulfilled, as in heaven, so on the angelic earth and within us, since

34 If God were not infinite and the ontological gap were able to be closed, then ordinary mortals would know God completely (as Jesus knows the Father). God would not be eternally new and ever more wondrous; consequently, the soul's desire could be satiated and fall away. Hans Boersma argues that the diastemic divide is a product of sin and will be dissolved eschatologically. See "Overcoming Time and Space: Gregory of Nyssa's Anagogical Theology", *J ECS* 20.4 (2012) 575–612. Boersma is correct that for Gregory there is a gap that is created by sin such that we do not abide in God. This gap is fully overcome eschatologically when God is all in all. Yet, I contend that for Gregory even while abiding in God for all eternity, the ontological gap remains such that there are always more wondrous aspects of God's goodness for us to desire and for God to reveal. Such desire does not compromise eschatological blessedness because the desire to see more is the product, not of some fundamental lack, but of enjoyment. See my larger discussion in *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa*, New York 2004, 202–227.

35 Here in *Cant IV* (GNO VI 134; tr. Norris 147), Gregory offers one his clearest statements about the Christian's proleptic participation in angelic life of the resurrection, "For since it has been proclaimed that our life after the resurrection will be like the angelic constitution [...] it would be appropriate even for our life in the world to be made ready for the life we hope for, so that those who live in the flesh and are not conformed to this world [...] practice beforehand the life for which they are hoping".

impassibility is being achieved”.³⁶ Given the logic of his theories of creation and participation, Gregory recognizes their crucial implication, namely: the human soul paradoxically attains the perfection of angelic impassibility only by perpetually growing to higher and better love for God. The alternative to the angelic life is ossification—when we cease to be human and instead become beasts of stone.

Commenting on Ct 4.8, where the Bridegroom summons the Bride “from the frankincense [...] from the beginnings of faith [...] from the lion’s den and the mountains of the leopards”, Gregory explains that the soul is exhorted to cleave to the life begun in baptism, by which we are “remodeled for a divine existence”.³⁷ However, although baptism might free us from the life under sin and idolatry (the lions and leopards), as creatures who are ever coming into being our nature is unstable and in danger of being changed for the worse if we gaze on fleshly objects. Therefore, we must gaze on God, who uses the very weakness of our creaturely nature—its instability—as the means for its glorification. The only way to keep human nature from falling back into sin is to keep it advancing in the knowledge and love of the Good. He writes,

The Word wishes us, mutable (τρεπτοὺς) as we are by nature, not to decline into evil by our changing, but through unending growth for the better to make change cooperate in our ascent toward higher things (διὰ τῆς αἰεὶ πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον γινομένης αὐξήσεως). In this way, by means of the very mutability (διὰ τοῦ τρεπτοῦ) of our nature we will be confirmed in an incapacity for evil (τὸ πρὸς τὸ κακὸν ἀναλλοιώτων). [...] by turning away from evil we will be wholly unswerving (ἀκλινές) and unchangeable (ἀπαράτρεπτον) in the good—neither coming to a stop in our change for the better nor being altered for the worse.³⁸

Perfect human nature can attain a firmness and stability with respect to the Good, such that we cannot fall away from God—*non posse peccare* as Augustine will put it—but the only way we can abide permanently in the Good is for our inherently mutable nature to be kept moving into God, kept growing in goodness.³⁹ Thus, for Gregory, the remedy for sin—that deforming movement away

36 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 135; tr. Norris 147).

37 ἀρχὴ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον μεταποιήσεως, *Cant* VIII (GNO VI 250; tr. Norris 263).

38 *Cant* VIII (GNO VI 252–253; tr. Norris 265–267).

39 Gregory sums up the essential roll of mutability in attaining perfection at the conclusion of *De perfectione*, “Suppose someone were to say that the good is hard to achieve, since only the Lord is immutable, while human nature is mutable and prone to changes. How,

from God—is the divinizing movement of the intellectual nature toward God. To put it another way, *theosis* is nothing other than God's creative process of perfecting human nature by setting humanity in the endless motion of desiring and being reformed by the One we desire. This is why Gregory can speak of baptism—the moment of *metanoia*, that turning from sin to God—as the moment of divinizing metamorphosis whereby we “have been changed by the myrrh of death into the deity of frankincense”.⁴⁰ Baptism is the beginning of the soul's rightly directed movement; but since every moment of the journey is a new beginning, Gregory blurs the line between the journey and the destination, between the process of divinization and the state of being divinized, between spiritual immaturity and spiritual perfection. The Bride's passing “from frankincense [...] from the beginning of faith” is the figure of baptismal resurrection and reformation into divinity.

Gregory depicts baptism as a resumption of God's creative work in the beginning. The voice of the Logos that spoke creation into existence and set the rational natures in motion is the voice of Bridegroom who calls those remade in baptism to follow the transformative becoming of the Christian life. Indeed, the awakened soul itself “is changed into something more divine and on account of her glad alteration is transformed from the glory that she had already reached to higher glory”,⁴¹ filled with a God-like love for God's own goodness. Then the soul, recreated by the Logos, attains *apatheia*, the mark of kinship with the angels.⁴² Such angelic impassibility is the perfect movement of the rational nature to higher and better things.

Although the *apatheia* of angelic stasis is proper to humanity's perfected nature, Gregory consciously subordinates the language of rest and permanence to that of advance and eternal ascent—probably out of a pastoral fear of the complacency: the self-confidence that mistakenly believes the virtues as our permanent possession. Gregory offers a pastoral admonition to this effect in the second homily. There Gregory attributes to the Bride the words of Ct 1.7, “Where do you pasture your flock? Where do you rest them at noonday? Let me become as one who is veiled by the flocks of your companions”. She asks

then, is it possible for steadfastness and freedom from change to be achieved in a mutable nature? [...] [W]hat seems to be feared—and I mean that ours is a mutable nature—the word has indicated to be like a kind of wing for flight to greater things, so that loss for us is being unable to accept alteration to the better”, *Perf* (GNO VIII/1 213–214; tr. Greer) in R.A. Greer—J.W. Smith, *One Path For All. Gregory of Nyssa on the Christian Life and Human Destiny*, Eugene (OR) 2015, 43–44.

40 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 249; tr. Norris 263).

41 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 253; tr. Norris 267).

42 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 254; tr. Norris 267).

the questions because she is “anxious about the beauty that had come to her from God and thought it vital to learn how her beauty might remain with her permanently (διηνεχῆς).”⁴³ Since, however, she is not worthy of receiving the Bridegroom, Gregory says that God “foresees something superior (κρείττον) for her: that delay of the fruition will inflame her desire to a higher point of yearning, and joy will be increased along with yearning.”⁴⁴ This is an odd analysis on Gregory’s part. For, earlier in the homily, he explains that the beauty, which the Bride desires to preserve, is that perfection in virtue that humanity lost by failing to guard itself against the wiles of the Devil.⁴⁵ In this context, the Bride’s zeal to make her virtue permanent is not a mark of vanity, but reflects the holy desire not to experience a second fall (For Gregory’s congregation, the issue is likely post-baptismal sin). What greater concern should humanity have than preserving the gift of holiness and virtue given by God? Yet as honorable as the Bride’s desire to guard her garden and preserve her virtue, the Bride’s anxiety reveals that she does not rightly understand the nature of her own beauty. She thinks of the beauty of her virtues as a quality that we *possess* in some absolute sense rather than seeing the virtues as a reflection of the perfect divine virtue which we acquire by our participation in God who is the source of humanity’s beauty and excellence. The virtues become qualities that genuinely constitute our divinized nature; yet they do so only in the way that an image inheres in a mirror by reflecting the image of that toward which it is oriented. Gregory’s concern is that the Bride’s proper focus should not be on the beauty of moral excellence so much as her union with the Bridegroom himself who is the source of her excellence. Preserve the union and the beauty will abide. In this way, Gregory is directing his congregation from a self-centered fixation with their own virtue to a focus upon God whose beauty is alone truly worthy of our worshipful gaze.

Gregory breaks with Clement and Athanasius in insisting that idolatry strips humanity of its essential mutability not because he ultimately denies that permanence and stasis are alien to perfected human existence. Rather he presents immutability as a corruption of our nature because he wants to emphasize that our nature as rational creatures is in a state of eternal becoming that distinguishes us from God. Being unchangeable at the level of nature would negate the fundamental difference between us creatures and our eternal Creator. The real issue for Gregory is that the spiritual meaning at the heart of the *Song of Songs* is the paradox of *epektasis*: we can become partakers of God’s eternal

43 *Cant II* (GNO VI 63; tr. Norris 71).

44 *Cant II* (GNO VI 63; tr. Norris 71).

45 *Cant II* (GNO VI 54; tr. Norris 59–61).

and immutable divinity only because we are changeable and ever changing. Christ our Bridegroom and Creator uses our capacity to change, to create and recreate, form and re-form us by drawing us into an eternal participation in his divinity. Only through our ability to change can we stretch out toward God and our desire for God be truly insatiable. Only in this way do we attain the *relational stasis* of eternal union with our beloved.

3 The Imperfect Stasis of Idolatry

When Gregory says that “the changeable nature of human beings had been altered to conform to that of unchangeable idols” he certainly does not think such unchangeability is like God’s unchangeability. Obviously, an idol created by humans and belonging to the material realm of flux cannot impart to its devotees the immutability of God. However, Gregory’s intentionally provocative assertion begs two questions. First, what does he mean when he calls the idol “unchangeable” (ἀκίνητος)? Second, in what sense does idolatry render human nature unchangeable?

The answer to the first question is fairly straightforward. The stone idol is unchanging in the sense that it is not alive. Like Pygmalion’s statue, it is inert matter possessing form but no animating principle. Without the powers of a vegetative soul it is incapable of growth. Without the faculties of a sentient soul, it lacks desire (ἐπιθυμία) and spirit (θυμός) that together form the principle of movement.⁴⁶ This understanding of Gregory’s description of the idol as ἀκίνητος helps to reframe the second question: In what sense does the worship of idols rob humanity of our capacity for growth and movement? Clearly, the growth and movement that Gregory has in mind are not physical but rather *epektatic*: they are the soul’s spiritual growth through our eternal movement in God’s infinite being. Our Bridegroom beckons and we follow. The soul’s movement into God is always a response to God’s prior movement toward us. At a basic level, therefore, the lifeless idol robs the soul of its capacity for spiritual ascent because the idol neither is God nor is an icon of the Divine that points beyond itself to God. However, the form of idolatry with which Gregory is concerned surpasses this basic interpretation.

Within the immediate context of homily five, the primary form of idolatry is the pagan worship of the Gentiles.⁴⁷ The pagan world, like Narnia before

46 See *An et res* (GNO III/3 44–45) and J.W. Smith, “Desire”, in: Mateo-Seco—Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 219–222.

47 Cf. *Cant VII* (GNO VI 205; tr. Norris 217) where Gregory depicts the Queen of the Ethiopians as a type of the Gentiles with their practice of idolatry.

Aslan's return, is a perpetual winter where souls are frozen lacking life and mobility because they do not participate in the true God who gives life and upward motion to the soul. Yet for Gregory there is a second, figural sense of εἰδωλολατρία. The worship of idols, Gregory argues, is the result of following the bestial appetites of our non-rational nature.⁴⁸ Εἰδωλολατρία is closely associated with the passions or inappropriate attachments to worldly pleasures, honors, and ambitions that supplant God as the proper object of desire.⁴⁹ Idolatry, therefore, has a second, broader figural meaning that denotes a life of sensual hedonism—a form of idolatry that may linger among Christians after they have ceased worshipping the pagan deities. Gregory's account of this misdirected desire may give a clue as to the logic behind the claim in *Homily v* that idolatry renders us unchangeable. The worldly objects of hedonistic indulgence actually satiate the soul's desire such that all appetite for the higher goods of God is lost. In the fourth homily on the Beatitudes—where he discusses Mt 5.6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice"—Gregory compares (in somewhat graphic terms) the loss of bodily appetite and the loss of desire for justice. So, when our digestive system is in some way blocked, our stomach feels full, appetite is satiated, and the desire for healthy foods is gone. Similarly, when we are sated by worldly things—material luxuries, sensual pleasures, even glory and honor—we no longer thirst after God and the goods of God that are the source of the soul's health.⁵⁰ Consequently, a purgative is needed.⁵¹ The soul must be purged so that its appetite for its proper object, God, might be restored. Gregory's logic here is that desire, far from rapaciously expanding, actually contracts when we acquire goods that are not proper "food" for the soul; such goods do not leave us unsatisfied—no, they satisfy desire enough that we do not seek the higher goods of God. By contrast, the virtues, such as justice, which are ends in themselves, never leave our desire satiated. Goods that are desired only as a means to an end do not eternally arouse desire but arrest it, losing their instrumental value once one attains the end for which they were a means.⁵² Within the logic of his analogy from the fourth beatitude, Gre-

48 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 251; tr. Norris 265).

49 *Cant II* (GNO VI 59; tr. Norris 65). Here Gregory describes humanity's fall as the result of having failed to be good guardians of the vineyard in Eden. As a result, humanity became keepers of the enemy's vineyard in the world.

50 *Beat IV* (GNO VII/2, 110–111; tr. Graef 118).

51 *Beat IV* (GNO VII/2, 110; tr. Graef 117).

52 *Beat IV* (GNO VII/2, 110–111; tr. Graef 118). Although Gregory in the *Homilies on the Beatitudes* does not employ the language of enjoyment as he does in *In Canticum Canticorum*, he nevertheless describes a similar dialectic, but this time using the images of feeding and desiring. A healthy appetite comes, he explains, from one who has physical strength from

gory would say that we have filled ourselves with the sweets of the world to the point that we are sick and so have lost our appetite for the God.

Gregory's discussion of satiated desire in the *Homilies on the Beatitudes* sheds light on how the idolatry of hedonistic consumption renders the soul "unchanging". Our faculty of desire, as the principle of movement that should propel the soul to seek God, is instead sated by our pursuit and acquisition of finite goods. Not only has desire for the world turned us away from God; its force has been exhausted by our worldly pursuits. We have no drive, no impetus, that moves the soul heavenward in search of our Bridegroom. Without a desire for God, we are like the stone idol, devoid of life lacking the capacity for spiritual growth through epectatic movement into the Divine. Gregory narrates, in the opening homily on the *Song of Songs*, precisely this difference between the soul that is alive with desire for God and the soul that has no love for God because its ἐπιθυμία has been sated by sensual indulgence. Commenting on Lk 7:36–50, he contrasts the unnamed woman, who kisses Jesus' feet and washes them with her tears and hair, and Simon the Leper, Jesus's host, who does not greet him with kisses. Into the mouth of the unnamed woman, Gregory places the cry from Ct 1.2—"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth"—and suggests that she who kisses the Bridegroom's feet is unsated in her desire for Christ and longs for the more intimate kiss of his mouth. By contrast, Simon's reticence to greet Jesus with a kiss is caused, Gregory explains, by the leprosy that results from his love of and indulgence in material luxuries that have sated his desire for God. Simon's life of fleshly passions illustrates Gregory's later connection between worldly attachments and idolatry.⁵³ Even more, Simon is an example of the principle of transformative participation that Gregory invokes to explain the corrupting effects of idolatry: Simon's soul has, like his body, become corrupted by the fleshly goods of which he partook. Simon is sated by the world and its pleasures; therefore, his soul has become ossified, immobile like an idol. With a sated desire for lifeless things, Simon is spiritually lifeless, unable to participate in God's creative process of eternal growth in divine love and virtue.

having eaten foods that promote bodily health. Strength comes from eating but one does not eat unless one has an appetite, which is "the principle and cause of our strength". Gregory's logic points to a cyclical relationship between strength and appetite; for, strength from a diet that promotes health is itself a condition for a healthy appetite. So too, that which is good in and of itself, namely God and virtue, is desired for itself.

53 *Cant* 11 (GNO VI 59,1; tr. Norris 65) and *Cant* VIII (GNO VI 251; tr. Norris 265).

4 Conclusion

Epektasis, our neologism for Gregory's use of Phil 3 to describe humanity's perfection through an eternal and progressive participation in God, is one of Gregory's most provocative and insightful contributions to Christian theology. It is a *basic* element of his theology both in the sense that the logic of *epektasis* is so elegantly simple that it can be summed up in a few sentences and yet its implications are myriad, pervasively informing his mature mystagogical exegesis.⁵⁴ Developing out of the epistemological significance of his doctrine of Divine infinity in his anti-Eunomian works, it reached its clearest articulation in *On Perfection* and *Life of Moses*. But it is in his homilies on the *Canticle* that he offers the most thorough-going account of the epectatic character of our participation in God. The commentary reflects his mature anthropology transformed—especially in his account of desire—by his developed appreciation of how the nature of the God in whom we participate determines his understanding of the creatures who participate in him. As much as Gregory's view of *epektasis* begins with his understanding of God's infinity, it is also equally dependent upon his doctrine of creation, with his concept of rational beings as inherently and inescapably creatures in an unceasing state of change, an eternal becoming. The case of idols and idolatry discussed in the fifth homily illustrates how profoundly Gregory's theory of human perfection as *epektasis* is the convergence of his understanding of our creaturely becoming with his concept of God's infinite goodness. The perfect and permanent union of the Christian with God is possible only if the soul is sustained in a ceaseless movement into the Good. Likewise, only a God of limitless goodness is a sufficiently wondrous object of contemplative enjoyment to arouse an immortal desire that keeps the soul eternally growing in blessed divinity. The idolater has, figuratively speaking, become something "other than human", something incapable of change, because he has abandoned the upward motion proper to intellectual natures. For the idolater's nature has been transformed such that it resembles the insensitivity of the idol he worships. The pagan's insensitivity—his blindness to beauty of the living God and his deafness to the call of the Bridegroom's voice—does not allow him to move perpetually from glory unto

54 On the significance of *epektasis* in Gregory's thought, Mateo-Seco writes, "*Epektasis* is so intimately tied to the essence of Gregory's thought that J. Daniélou (1953, 291–292) presents it as 'the synthesis of Gregorian spirituality in its central theme' in so far as 'it belongs to the very essence of the spiritual life to be a continual progress'" (L.F. Mateo-Seco, "*Epektasis*", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 263).

glory, to the better and higher goods of God's infinity. The worship of a lifeless idol has the effect of transforming the intellectual nature into something less than human because in its finitude the idol—or any finite creature we may choose to worship and fix our gaze upon—can be comprehended and therefore cannot be the object of eternal contemplation. A mind set upon a finite object undergoes a type of cognitive atrophy. Its thoughts become fixed and all intellectual vitality ceases. Then we become something “other than human”—we become petrified humanity no longer capable of movement, growth, and development—as is proper for intellectual natures—“unable to be changed for the better.”⁵⁵ By contrast, Gregory says, only the Sun of righteousness with the warm spring winds of the Spirit has the power to command the paralytic, “Rise up and walk.” Only the Bridegroom, who is the Logos that created our intellectual nature in his image, can deliver us from sin into the perfect *stasis* of an eternal union with himself.⁵⁶ Such blessed *stasis* can be achieved only because the Bridegroom eternally creates our intellectual nature by ever drawing us into his infinite goodness.

As the culminating union of Gregory's theology and anthropology, the homilies establish an absolute metaphysical boundary between the divine and human natures that regulates any claim one may make either anthropologically about the perfection of human nature or soteriologically about *theosis* and the beatific vision. The contrast between God as eternal Being, immutable and unchanging, and humanity as eternal becoming, ever growing in conformity to God's goodness, allows Gregory to speak of *theosis* in a way that avoids collapsing humanity into the divine nature. For it allows for a distinctly human form of perfection that entails its reflection of divine eternity while at the same time retaining the mutability inherent to our creaturely nature.

55 *Cant* v (GNO VI 147; tr. Norris 161).

56 *Cant* v (GNO VI 148–149; tr. Norris 161–163). Here Gregory plays on the parallel between Jesus' command to the paralytic “Rise up” (Mt 9.5–6) and Bridegroom's summon to the Bride, “Rise up, come, my close one, my fair one, my dove” (Ct 2.10). Together with the reference to the dove and the Holy Spirit in whose image the Bride has been remade, the command, “Rise up” (Ἀνάστα) may have echoes of baptism and rising from the font born of water and the Spirit (GNO VI 150–151; tr. Norris 163). As Everett Ferguson points out in his essay in this volume (“Theology of Baptism in the *In Canticum Canticorum* of Gregory of Nyssa”), Gregory explains the Bride's words in Ct 5.5, “I rose up (Ἀνέστην) to open to my kinsman”, by conjoining them with Paul's baptismal language in Rm 6.4, “I have risen up by being ‘buried with him through baptism into his death’”.

Bibliography

- Blowers, P.M. "Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of 'Perpetual Progress'", *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992) 151–171.
- Boersma, H. "Overcoming Time and Space: Gregory of Nyssa's Anagogical Theology", *J ECS* 20.4 (2012) 575–612.
- Greer, R.A.—J.W. Smith, *One Path For All. Gregory of Nyssa on the Christian Life and Human Destiny*, Eugene (OR) 2015.
- Laird, M. *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence*, Oxford 2004.
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. "Epektasis", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 263–268.
- Smith, J.W. *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa*, New York 2004;
- Smith, J.W. "Desire", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.) *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 19–222.

Gregory of Nyssa on Spiritual Ascent and Trinitarian Orthodoxy: a Reconsideration of the Relation between Doctrine and Askesis

Sarah Coakley

1 Introduction. The Relation of Apologetic and Exegetical Texts in the Trinitarian Thought of Gregory of Nyssa: Aporia or Climax?

In an edited volume on Gregory of Nyssa's theology, published in 2003, I ended my short introduction with the following remark: "What if a new pedagogy of Gregory's trinitarianism should *start* with the rich insights into incorporation into the life of the Trinity brought about by mature 'faith' [...] [πίστις]? How then would we turn back to read the import of the earlier, more obviously polemical, discussions [sc. of the Trinity]? The emphases and expectations [...] would be significantly different from those of the old textbook account [...]"¹ I went on to urge in closing a new "integration" of what modernity had—as I put it—"balefully dubbed Gregory's 'spirituality', on the one hand, [over against] his 'theology' and 'philosophy', on the other".²

My purpose in this essay, then, is to make good on that promissory note in *Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa* and to attempt a further clarification and assessment of the novel emphases of trinitarian thinking to be found in Nyssen's last great work, the commentary on the *Song*.³ I am well aware that in the years

1 S. Coakley, "Introduction—Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of *The Song*", in: Ead. (ed.), *Rethinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Malden 2003, 1–14, here 11 (my emphasis).

2 I had in mind there, of course, the enormously significant and influential wartime monograph on Nyssen by J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique: Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1944¹, 1953², with its analysis of Gregory's so-called "doctrine spirituelle", its account of his theory of "mystical experience". While Daniélou brought the late commentary works of Gregory into the public eye to enormous new effect, it might be said that he had subtly re-directed Gregory's intentions to his own purposes (his particular interests in "spirituality" and the so-called "natural desire for God" beloved of the emerging leaders of *la nouvelle théologie*), and thus according to the intellectual and philosophical fashions of his era. On this significant point of context, see my article "Gregory of Nyssa", in: P.L. Gavrilyuk—S. Coakley (eds.), *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, Cambridge 2012, 36–55.

3 H. Langerbeck (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera: VI. In Canticum Canticorum* (hereafter GNO VI), Leiden 1960. In what follows I also utilize the parallel Greek text and English translation in

since the appearance of the little *Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa* book, and especially in the profusion of excellent papers gathered in this volume, some of this integrative work has already been done, and with great *panache*.⁴ If what I argue here already sounds somewhat familiar, then, it will simply be because this paradigm shift in interpretation has, happily—at least in some circles—already become a reality. But perhaps nonetheless I may still add something to its force by a certain retrospective clarification, even systematization, of the effects of that shift for a full account of Gregory's trinitarianism, since the matter clearly still remains contentious in the context of *Dogmengeschichte*.⁵ Yet I make that claim of systematization, of course, with a due sense of irony: Gregory himself is no "systematic" thinker whatever (especially not in the modern sense), but simply discourses freely in the *genre* appropriate to a particular context. Thus there are certain dangers—not least of anachronistic imposition—in attempting to "tidy up" after him in the way I propose. Nonetheless, I shall argue there is something important to be gained by focussing schematically on the distinctive new dimensions of trinitarian thinking which emerge only in the *Song* commentary, and the methodological significance of these shifts for any nuanced contemporary teaching about the doctrine of the Trinity in Gregory.

The main problem that confronts us in the *Song* commentary, of course, is the seemingly random, erratic, and exotic imprecision of trinitarian imagery which permeates the text, *qua* commentary, in contrast with the earlier apologetic treatises on the Trinity waged against late Arianism and purportedly primarily devoted to philosophical rigour and clarity—precisely for the purposes of warding off doctrinal *error*.⁶ A modern Lacanian might say that Gregory

R.A. Norris Jr., *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012, hereafter "Norris", except where I indicate a slight change in translation.

- 4 One thinks, for instance, of M. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence*, Oxford 2004; J. Behr, *The Nicene Faith. Part Two: One of the Holy Trinity*, Crestwood (NY) 2004; G. Maspero, *Trinity and Man: Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabium*, Leiden 2007; Id., "The Fire, the Kingdom and the Glory: The Creator Spirit and the Intra-Trinitarian Processions in the *Adversus Macedonianos* of Gregory of Nyssa", in: V.H. Drecoll—M. Berghaus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarianism*, Leiden 2011, 229–276; and for acute secondary commentary, M. Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa: Ancient and (Post)Modern*, Oxford 2007.
- 5 See especially the contribution of Volker Drecoll in this volume, whose perspective differs markedly from my own; and for further discussion, *infra*, below.
- 6 The key philosophical/apologetic texts have been closely studied in recent "Proceedings" of International Colloquia on Gregory of Nyssa: see L. Karfiková—S. Douglass—J. Zachuber (eds.), *Contra Eunomium II*, Leiden 2007; V.H. Drecoll—M. Berghaus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarianism*, Leiden 2011; and J. Leemans—

has now adopted the “semiotic” (over the “symbolic”) voice; a modern analytic philosopher might charge that he has deserted coherence for fatal inconsistency. But the modern historian of theological ideas should, if suitably attuned to Gregory’s context and varied *genres* of writing, be aware in contrast that Gregory’s commentary work is an extraordinarily rich resource for understanding the depth of his theological insights. Is this type of exegetical exposition an *aporia* for the dogmatician in search of Gregory’s full trinitarian *Nachlass*, then, or does it represent a climax to it?⁷ I shall be arguing here for the “climax” over the “aporia” view, although not without some critical admissions. I shall proceed in four stages.

First, I shall draw attention to the very *precise* (not sloppy or careless) way in which Gregory conjoins in the commentary work an apophatic discourse on the essential divine mystery, on the one hand, with a profusion of what he calls “enigmas” (or metaphors) for trinitarian reflection, on the other. This is an entirely intentional strategy, I shall show, indeed for Gregory finally the *most* appropriate to the matter in hand, not a lapse into confusion or incoherence. And it certainly does not abandon the substantial theological task of trinitarian reflection, but instead develops a new form of it which is both noteworthy and distinctive. Secondly, I shall draw attention to the specific significance of what we may today call the “epistemology of desire and gender” for an account of the *Song* commentary’s relevance for trinitarian thought: again, this is not an optional, *ad hoc*, or embarrassing accompaniment, but the only posture for Gregory from which to speak, as he puts it, “ecstatically” of God as Trinity, odd as this may seem to the modern commentator. Thirdly, and most importantly: what this implies for trinitarian exposition is the notion of a *sliding scale* of insight into the nature of the trinitarian God which is ranged along the development of what Gregory calls “spiritual sense” and the purification of passions in the growth of virtue. Hence doctrinal truth, for Gregory, is not enunciated on a flat plane, but *in via* towards “union” and “ecstasy”: the way the Christian understands the Trinity will *change* along this path. This in turn means that the Spirit’s invitation into the life of God signals a *progressive* “mingling” with

M. Cassin (eds.), *Contra Eunomium III*, Leiden 2014. As many essays in these volumes point out, Gregory does not always achieve the philosophical consistency and coherence to which he aspires, and he is always aware of his apophatic limitations in attempting to speak with complete precision of the nature of the trinitarian God; nonetheless, his apologetic *intentions* are clear enough in these polemical contexts.

7 The question becomes particularly charged, within this volume, in the important methodological divergences already evidenced between Drecoll and Brugarolas: see *supra* 180–197 and 200–229. In the context of the conference itself this paper recapitulated and extended that debate.

Christ, a development which might suggest a loss of fully trinitarian thinking,⁸ but which—I argue, in contrast—Gregory would see quite differently: this is precisely the point in which extrinsic theorization about the Trinity issues in incorporation into the life of God (in Christ) itself. What we now in the modern period distinguish as “Trinitarianism” and “Christology” are inseparable for Gregory here. Finally, and fourthly, I shall draw some conclusions about what this means for Gregory’s doctrine of the Trinity when compared with still-standard contemporary textbook accounts of the matter: there is indeed a significant set of doctrinal implications which I shall enumerate in closing, for all the problems which this approach also brings in its train.

2 Apophasis and “Enigma”: Complementarity Not Contradiction

Gregory’s denial of any knowledge of God in “essence” is carried over from his celebrated trinitarian apologetic treatises of the “middle” period of his career,⁹ but given, I submit, an important new twist in the late commentaries. In no way has he departed, of course, from his characteristic insistence that “there is no faculty adequate to the full comprehension of the divine essence”;¹⁰ but he is remarkably *precise* and “clear” (his word) about the implications of this tenet for engagement with the biblical text, which educes what he calls a new level of *philosophia*: “Philosophical treatment of these matters”, he writes in *Homily VI*, “transposes the surface meaning of the thoughts into the key of the pure and immaterial, and sets forth the teachings of the faith, using the enigmas provided by the events narrated in order to arrive at a *clear* grasp of what is revealed”.¹¹ He goes on, citing (not for the first or last time) the case of Moses in Ex 20 and the Ps verse¹² that God “made darkness his hiding place”: “when I

8 As we shall discuss below, Volker Drecoll regards this trope as a sign of the unfortunate collapse of “Trinitarianism” into “Christology”, whereas I urge it is actually a sign of a more mature, assimilated and integrated understanding of both.

9 Various periodization theories exist for Gregory’s works; a now-classic, albeit contested, one is that of J. Daniélou, “La chronologie des œuvres de Grégoire de Nysse”, *Studia Patristica* 7 (1966) 159–169. For these purposes his rough distinction between “middle” and “late” works suffices here, and is not overall contentious.

10 *Eun* II 67 (GNO I 245,18–24; tr. P. Schaff—H. Wace [eds.], *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, v: *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatise, etc.*, Peabody, MA 1995, 257a): οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει δύναμις εἰς ἀκριβή κατανόησιν οὐσίας θεοῦ.

11 ἡ φιλοσοφία πρὸς τὸ καθαρὸν τε καὶ αὔλον μετεγκοῦσα τὰς τῶν νοημάτων ἐμφάσεις διὰ τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐπιτελουμένων προάγει τὰ δόγματα τοῖς τῶν γινομένων αἰνίγμασι συγχρησαμένη πρὸς τὴν τῶν δηλουμένων σαφήνειαν. *Cant VI* (GNO VI 180; tr. Norris 192–193, my emphasis).

12 Ps 17.2.

have entered into the Invisible, with the world of sense left behind me, when [...]. I am seeking what is hidden in the darkness—that is when I have indeed laid hold on love for the one I desire, but the object of my love has flown from *the net of my thoughts*.¹³ But he then adds just a little later: “[No sooner had I] [...] left behind every conceptual approach, then I found the Beloved by faith, and holding on by faith’s grasp to the one I have found, I will not let go until he is within my chamber”.¹⁴ Martin Laird is entirely right, then, to point out—in correction of Daniélou on this point¹⁵—that Gregory’s celebrated apophatic “darkness” theme is in every way complemented in the *Song* commentary—though of course paradoxically—by the new clarity and luminosity of what emerges in the Bride who has undergone the necessary epistemological and moral transformation in order to receive such. As Gregory puts it explicitly in *Homily XI*, “There was a time when the Bride was *dark* [...]. But when she separated herself from any kinship with evil and sought, in that mystical kiss, to bring her mouth to the fount of light, then she became beautiful and good, illumined by the light of truth”.¹⁶ Crucial here, however, is a proper understanding of the mode of discourse (the use of “enigma”, “dark saying”, or “parable”—as already explained by Gregory in his Preface¹⁷) which is suitable to this form of *philosophia*: we are in a notably different world from the apologetic trinitarian treatises, but one more profound, not less, if Gregory is to be believed, discoursing now with a Solomonic wisdom “transcend[ing] the heights of [mere] human wisdom”, as he puts it in *Homily I*.¹⁸

Moreover, it is certainly not the case that trinitarianism has disappeared from the text of the *Song*, once we look for the appropriate new “enigmatic” manifestations of it. Indeed, a profusion of different metaphors for the Trinity, suitable to this discourse, are scattered throughout the *Homilies*, sometimes

13 ὅτε τῶν ἀοράτων ἐντὸς ἐγενόμην καταλιπούσα τὰ αἰσθητήρια, ὅτε περισχέθην τῇ θείᾳ νυκτὶ τὸν ἐν τῷ γνόφῳ κεκρυμμένον ἀναζητούσα, τότε τὴν μὲν ἀγάπην πρὸς τὸν ποθοῦμενον εἶχον, αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ ἀγαπώμενον διέπτη τῶν λογισμῶν τὴν λαβὴν. *Cant VI* (GNO VI 181; tr. Norris 192–193, my emphasis).

14 καὶ πάσαν καταληπτικὴν ἔφοδον καταλιπούσα, τῇ πίστει εὗρον τὸν ἀγαπώμενον καὶ οὐκέτι μεθήσω τῇ τῆς πίστεως λαβῇ τοῦ εὐρεθέντος ἀντεχομένη, ἕως ἂν ἐντὸς γέννηται τοῦ ἐμοῦ ταμείου. *Cant VI* (GNO VI 183; tr. Norris 194–195).

15 M. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith*, ch. 7, 174–204.

16 This comes *after* Moses’s three “stages” of ascent (see Norris, 338–339): ἦν ὅτε μέλαινα ἦν ἡ νύμφη [...] ἀλλ’ ἐπειδὴ τῆς πρὸς τὸ κακὸν συμφυΐας ἑαυτὴν ἀποσπάσασα διὰ τοῦ μυστικοῦ ἐκείνου φιλήματος τῇ πηγῇ τοῦ φωτὸς προσαναγαεῖν τὸ στόμα ἐπόθησε, τότε καλὴ γίνεται τῷ φωτὶ τῆς ἀληθείας περιλαφθεῖσα [...]. *Cant XI* (GNO VI 324, 5; tr. Norris, 340–341, my emphasis).

17 See *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 3–13; tr. Norris 2–13).

18 τὴν ὑπερβαίνουσαν τοὺς ὅρους τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας. *Cant I* (GNO VI 29; tr. Norris 30–31, my emphasis).

chaotically entangled with one another. The most extended example of such comes in the oft-commented-upon passage in *Homily IV*,¹⁹ in which the Bride receives an arrow of love into her heart, shot by the Father who is the archer, the Son who is the arrow, and the Spirit as that in which the arrow is dipped. Conjoined with this image, however, is the Son as bridegroom, with his left hand under the bride's head and his right hand receiving her body:²⁰ just as the arrow penetrates the bride's soul with the wound of love, so the bridegroom penetrates (takes possession of) the bride. But the bride then herself *becomes* an extension or replication of the Son's arrow, since she has been allowed to "participate" in his "eternal incorruptibility."²¹ Another trinitarian superimposition of images also comes a little earlier in *Homily IV*,²² when the bride is escorted by the Spirit of "prophecy", who is also a dove, into a new filial relationship to her "true Father" (τὸν ἀληθινὸν [...] πατέρα), alongside the Son, and so herself becomes "dove-like", "gazing at the mystery through dove's eyes" (καὶ βλέπει τι μυστήριον διὰ τῶν τῆς περιστεῖδος ὀφθαλμῶν);²³ yet confusingly enough she is at the same time turned into a lily, no longer "injured by thorny temptations" (μηδὲν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀκανθορφόρων πειρασμῶν [...] παραβλαβεῖσα). Yet a further significant visual image for the Trinity arises in *Homily XII*,²⁴ in which the Spirit is the wind sent by the Father in the sails of the vessel (the Church) that is moved to contemplate the Word in the *Song* text, such that "reason", the "helmsman", is transported, and the whole voyage prospered. Finally, there is the remarkable climax of *Homily XV*,²⁵ in which,²⁶ Gregory describes the Spirit—in what would later come to be seen as an exclusively "Western" prerogative—as the "bond" (τὸ [...] συνδετικόν) of "glory" between Father and Son, that glory again overflowing to the Church.

Other fragmentary, quasi-trinitarian images are also added in passing to this collage;²⁷ but the important point is that Gregory allows himself to discourse

19 See Norris, 140–143 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 127–129); there is a discussion of this passage in M. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith*, 128, although there it is the topic of "faith" that is attended to, rather than the Trinity.

20 See Ct 2.5–6.

21 Gregory thus acknowledges that he is using "two enigmas at the same time": "to show that one and the same is both our Bridegroom and our Archer, who handles the purified soul both as bride and as arrow". *Cant IV* (GNO VI 129; tr. Norris 140–141).

22 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 115–116; tr. Norris 128–129).

23 I have slightly adjusted Norris's translation here.

24 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 341–342; tr. Norris 360–363).

25 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 466–467; tr. Norris 494–497).

26 Commenting on Jn 17.21 in the Farewell Discourses.

27 It is true that some of the images involve Spirit and Son and a (presumed) Father, e.g., the "scent of the divine perfumes", the "sweet smell of Christ" and the inhalation of the Spirit

freely and imaginatively from the *Song* text and whatever it suggests to him, glorying in a wealth of mutually bombarding images. Instead of choosing one or two key analogies to illustrate the rational coherence of a God who is simultaneously three-in-one (as in his apologetic texts on the Trinity), the emphasis is instead on *incorporation* into, and/or *extension* of, the *energeia* of the Trinity into the life of the believer or the Church. And the seeming illogicality of this profusion of images is surely quite deliberate: one finds here an anticipation of what is later to be stated explicitly by the ps.-Denys in his *Mystical Theology*:²⁸ a policy of creative metaphoric profusion, designed precisely to guard the divine mystery, to prevent an idolatrous freezing of any one set of analogies.

Yet to repeat my first main point here before moving forward: there is nothing sloppy, in my view (nothing un-“clear”, in Gregory’s own words) about his different approach to the Trinity in the *Homilies* than elsewhere—his particular new combination here of apophasis and “riddle”; it is simply a matter of rightly understanding the “rules” of *this* “philosophic” game. As he puts it explicitly in the Preface: “Unless one perceives the truth in these matters through philosophy [sc. in this exegetical sense], what is being said will appear to the *inattentive* to be incoherent or mythical”.²⁹

I now pass on to my remaining points, which can be dealt with more succinctly now these proposed ground rules for interpretation have been established.

3 The Way of Ascent as Incorporation into the Divine: an Epistemology of Desire and Gender

So what then, secondly, is specific to the trinitarian epistemology of the *Song* commentary, in particular, given Gregory’s insistence about these rules for exegetical “philosophia”, *tout court*?

The crucial thing to bear in mind, first, is the ascending logic of the Solomon-ic ascent of *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Song of Songs*, as Gregory too reminds his

(*Cant* I [GNO VI 35; tr. Norris 36–37]); or the Holy Spirit as “the torch for the wedding feast” (sc. with the Bridegroom, Christ) (*Cant* XIII [GNO VI 388; tr. Norris 408–409]); but at I read it this is all part of Gregory’s deliberately unsystematic confusion of trinitarian images.

28 See the distinctive discussion of metaphorical profusion and negative theological language in G. Heil—A.M. Ritter (eds.), *De Mystica Theologia, Corpus Dionysiacum* 11, Berlin 1991, 141–150.

29 οἷς εἰ μὴ τις διὰ φιλοσοφίας ἐνθεωρήσειε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἀσύστατον ἢ μυθῶδες εἶναι τοῖς ἀνεπισκέπτοις τὸ λεγόμενον δοῖται. *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 11; tr. Norris 8–9, my emphasis).

readers at the outset of the commentary, in *Homily* I.³⁰ So in the *Song* commentary Gregory's congregation, even if they are still "fleshly minded" at the outset, are now being invited into the purgative apex of the ascent; and what this requires is both a different sort of thinking about the Trinity (from the inside of the life of God, as it were) and, correlatively, a different sort of epistemic and moral approach from heretofore. And these developments are closely connected. It is not just that one is freed up at this stage to entertain a glorious profusion of trinitarian metaphors (as already discussed), but also—I now submit in addition—that the very way of thinking about "participation" in the life of the Trinity has subtly shifted for Gregory in relation to this stage of the Christian life. (This is admittedly not an absolute disjunction from his earlier language of participation in the Trinity in the apologetic works, but I think it is a significant difference of emphasis.) Instead of the Spirit inviting one into the *taxis* of the three-in-one on a linear or "chain" model of ascent (a way of thinking that Gregory of course inherited from his brother Basil),³¹ in the *Song* commentary we get something inspired much more directly by the reflexive, dialectical, incorporation suggested by Rm 8.14–27.³² The Spirit scoops up the Christian prayer into union with the suffering and triumphant Christ, and so is progressively "adopted" into the Son's filial posture, adopted into intimacy thereby with the "true", as opposed to the "false" "Father" (Gregory discourses explicitly on this, as we have already mentioned, in *Homily* IV³³). But note that this does not leave the epistemic subject as it started: this is now more truly, says Gregory, the posture of a "daughter" or a "sister" than that of a son, since something crucial has happened by the ecstatic intensification of the desire of the bride

30 *Cant* I (GNO VI 17; tr. Norris 18–19).

31 Basil's *Epistle* 38, now agreed by almost all scholars to be a work of Gregory, famously uses the chain analogy to describe how one "pulls" from the Spirit through to the other "persons" (ed. R.J. Defferari, *St. Basil, The Letters*, Loeb Classical Library, London 1926, i. 210–211). It is difficult completely to disassociate this from the remaining sense of neo-Platonic hierarchical ascent that occasionally manifests itself in Basil's trinitarian work: see especially his *de Spiritu sancto*, 9.23 (SC 17bis, 328–331).

32 The distinctiveness of a patristic trinitarian conceptuality which starts from Paul's analysis of the nature of prayer in Rm 8 is a theme I have traced in detail in my *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'*, Cambridge 2013, ch. 3; and see also 287–288 for a very brief account of the problem of relating Nyssen's polemical trinitarian works with his late exegetical expositions. In this current essay I am now filling in the picture which I did not complete in that study: Gregory's *Song* commentary represents, I now see, a final assimilation and expression by him of what I call the *Romans* 8 model, worked out with unusual freedom and originality.

33 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 115–116; tr. Norris 128–129).

for the bridegroom, wrought in the Spirit.³⁴ Desire has now become as much receptive as endlessly questing;³⁵ and the climax of Gregory's extraordinarily complex and rich theory of (what we now call) "gender" has been reached in the process. Yet this is no mere recapitulation of any worldly "femininity" or submission. As Raphael Cadenhead has argued convincingly in his recent Cambridge doctoral thesis (putting a number of contemporary exegetes of gender in Gregory to shame, including me in my earlier writings),³⁶ the normative "femininity" espoused by Gregory in the *Song* commentary is distinctive, bold and *sui generis*, and passes even beyond anything enunciated about gender by him in the *Life of Moses*. This is nothing to do with the negative "womanishness" discussed in that text, and beyond too even the positive "manly" virtues enunciated there also and in many other earlier texts of Gregory's. Instead, the manly "hoplites" who surround the bride at the end of *Homily* VI, guarding her virtue and representing her victory in "engkrateia" (self-control) over the negative passions, represent precisely that positive vision of "masculinity" which is now trumped, or perhaps finally assumed into, the unique active passivity of the Bride's erotic intensity.³⁷ As Gregory puts it: "That is why the King's [sc. Christ's] marriage bed must be surrounded by a circle of hoplites. Their skill in fighting and their possession of a sword ready on the thigh breeds astonishment and terror in the dark thoughts that waylay and assault [...] those who are

34 See *Cant* XI (GNO VI 324–325; tr. Norris 342–345).

35 And note that desire here is ultimately *God's* (see *Cant* I [GNO VI 31–32; tr. Norris 32–33]), bestowed upon the questing Christian. This insight anticipates Denys's more fully-wrought metaphysic of divine desire in *Divine Names*, IV (B.R. Suchla [ed.], *Corpus Dionysiacum* 1, Berlin 1990, 143–180).

36 See R.A. Cadenhead, "Corporeality and Desire: A Diachronic Study of Gregory of Nyssa's Ascetical Theology", Cambridge Ph.D., 2013, esp. ch. XVIII: "Male' and 'Female': Diachronic Exchanges", 228–253. Here Cadenhead demonstrates that Nyssen's views of "gender" continue to change and modify in his late works, and even between his two last great commentaries, such that in the homilies on the *Song*, "the transcendence of 'male' and 'female' is preeminently accomplished through an intense erotic participation in God" (*ibidem*, 252). (This contrasts with the view of gender exemplified even in *The Life of Moses*.) By his close attention to the detail of these texts, Cadenhead is able to correct earlier contemporary renditions of Gregory's attitudes to gender, such as found, e.g., in Verna E.F. Harrison ("A Gender Reversal in Gregory of Nyssa's First Homily on the *Song of Songs*", *Studia Patristica* 27 [1993] 34–38), and in my own earlier work ("The Eschatological Body: Gender, Transformation and God", *Modern Theology* 16 [2000] 61–73)], which I have now slightly re-considered. In short, Gregory's position finds no easy or exact parallel in contemporary secular gender theory, and relies crucially on the subtle transformations brought about by contemplative practice.

37 See *Cant* VII (GNO VI 198; tr. Norris 210–211): "For the person who has girded his sword on his thigh has been stripped of passion by devotion to the virtuous life".

upright of heart”.³⁸ Safely inside their circle, however, is the mystic “bed” where Christ comes into union with the bride, the adopted “child”, through her new “invulnerability to passion”.³⁹ Strangely, one of the metaphysical effects of this moral and epistemic transformation is not only to “feminize” the Christian in this *sui generis* way, but also—as we hear in both *Homily VI* and *Homily XV*—to free up the Christian to call the persons of the Trinity “mother” as well as “father”.⁴⁰

In short, and to sum up my second point: the complex analyses of transformed desire and transformed gender throughout the *Homilies* are not optional accompaniments to the new approach to the Trinity enunciated at this stage of ascent. They are *intrinsic* to the undertaking. The Christian soul is now invited into an “ecstatic” participation in the inner life of the Trinity; but this comes with enormous moral demands and a profound shift in consciousness about how “gendered”, desiring selfhood is to respond to God.

4 Spiritual Ascent and Spiritual Sensation: the Soul in Via to a “Mingling” with Christ

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, Gregory’s much-vaunted “doctrine of the spiritual senses” is, by the same token, to be fitted crucially into this same growth of ascent into the Trinity. However, for all Jean Daniélou’s brilliance in first highlighting this theme of “spiritual sensation” in the *Song* commentary,⁴¹ his treatment I believe contains some distracting and misleading dimensions. In a recent essay on this issue I have argued, first, that the “spiritual sense” trope is one that runs throughout Gregory’s *oeuvre* (it does not just emerge, fully blown, in the late commentary work), and moreover it comes with significant shifts at transitional moments in Gregory’s career, especially in the dialogue with Macrina in *de anima et de resurrectione*, when the epistemolog-

38 οὐκ οὖν ἀναγκαίως ἡ νυμφικὴ τοῦ βασιλέως κλίνη τοῖς ὀπλίταις ἐν κύκλῳ διαλαμβάνεται, ὧν ἡ τοῦ πολεμεῖν ἐμπειρία καὶ τὸ πρόχειρον ἔχειν ἐπὶ τοῦ μηροῦ τὴν ῥομφαίαν θάμβος καὶ ἔκπληξιν ἐμποιεῖ τοῖς σκοτεινοῖς λογισμοῖς [...] τοὺς εὐθεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ λοχῶσί τε καὶ τοξεύουσιν. *Cant VI* (GNO VI 192; tr. Norris, 204–205).

39 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 198–199; tr. Norris, 210–211).

40 See *Cant VII* (GNO VI 212–213; tr. Norris 224–225), on the equal significance of calling God “mother” or “father”; and compare *Cant XV* (GNO VI 468–469; tr. Norris 496–499) on the issue of the significance of the dove’s “mother”, since “God may become all in *all persons*” (my emphasis).

41 J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique* (19441), especially ch. 2, 235–266.

ical problem of “small-souled” perception is first discussed in some detail.⁴² The teaching on spiritual sense is, then, a feature of Gregory’s epistemology in general, and not just of his late account of “la vie spirituelle”, as Daniélou would have it; but it is also more *ad hoc* in its enunciation than Daniélou would suggest by his theory of a “doctrine” of spiritual sense. When one does a consistent trawl through the *Commentary* for the language of “spiritual sense”, a completely ordered account is not vouchsafed.⁴³ what *is* distinctive to the *Commentary* treatment, however, is a new attention to the purified lower senses (taste, touch, smell, as well as the senses of hearing and sight)—for now the self in all her fleshly dimensions is being progressively purified; but it is not the case that the “lower” senses consistently trump the higher, or that the bride remains *forever* in visual darkness—despite the impression given of that logic in one important passage in *Homily* VI,⁴⁴ already cited and specially utilized by Daniélou. For earlier in the same *Homily*, Gregory will rehearse the language of all the senses in quick succession and then add that the bride is becoming through this “*more clear-sighted*” (διορατικωτέρα γὰρ γινόμενη), and starting to “see” the One whom she desires.⁴⁵ And earlier still, in *Homily* III, Gregory will make the wholly characteristic remark that the birth of Jesus in each of us (sc. through the transformations of spiritual sense) is “not the same in all but indwells in a way that accords with the capacity of the one into whom he comes”.⁴⁶ It follows that the “ordering” of the purification of senses may occur in different people differently, depending on their *attraits* and levels of spiritual maturity. This integration and transformation of sensual life is however part and parcel of the transformation in *virtue* and mastery of the passions already discussed. The spiritual sense teaching therefore is both epistemological and moral in its implications: it is a major tool by which Gregory speaks of human selfhood’s responsive transformation by the Holy Spirit along the *diachronic*

42 See again for further detailed discussion of this topic, S. Coakley, “Gregory of Nyssa”, in: Gavriluk—Coakley (eds.), *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God*, 36–55.

43 The first enunciation of the theme comes importantly in *Homily* I, when the contentious quotation from Proverbs is cited, and the thesis expounded that “there is a certain analogy between the sense organs of the body and the operations of the soul”. *Cant* I (GNO VI 34–35; tr. Norris 36–37). Also see *Cant* IV (GNO VI 105–106; tr. Norris 117) for the connection between the Rm 8 “incorporative” trinitarian model and the spiritual sense epistemology.

44 See *Cant* VI (GNO VI 181–182; tr. Norris 192–193).

45 *Cant* VI (GNO VI 176–177; tr. Norris 188–189, my emphasis); and see the immediately ensuing discussion, *ad loc.*, in which smell, taste, touch, hearing and sight and all mentioned in quick succession.

46 οὐκ ἐν πᾶσιν ὁ αὐτός ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ μέτρον τοῦ ἐν ᾧ γίνεται [...]. *Cant* III (GNO VI 96; tr. Norris 106–107).

line of journey into God-as-Trinity. When he speaks about the *ontological* condition of union with Christ thereby achieved, however, his preferred vocabulary is often the contentious language of “mingling”: mingling between human and divine natures *in* Christ, mingling between the individual soul or the church *with* Christ, and the underlying erotic allusion to sexual “mingling” (in one case, in *Homily* IV, all three of these jumble on top of one another;⁴⁷ but the language of *mixis* and *krasis* and cognates is pervasive throughout the *Commentary*).

It follows, then, that what in the modern period we call “Christology” as opposed to “Trinitarianism” are for Gregory, according to this progressivist logic of the ascent of the *Song*, inexorably conjoined. To be knit into the Trinity by the Spirit’s “adoption” and through the operation of “spiritual sense” is to be “mingled” with Christ; and if this appears to the modern reader like a frustrating sleight of hand, or a false *reduction* of “Trinity” to “Christology”, then we may be missing the plot of the gift of spiritual sensation that propels the whole transformative enterprise. One final effect for trinitarian thinking of the distinctive *Song*-type I have been outlining in this paper comes, as mentioned earlier, in the very last *Homily* xv and surprises us there yet further with its novelty: the assertion of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity as “bond” of glory *between* Father and Son, overflowing into the life of the Church through the first disciples: “Therefore the person who has left immaturity behind”, Gregory concludes, “[...] and by impassibility and purity has become a recipient of the Spirit’s glory—this is that perfect dove on whom the Bridegroom looks”.⁴⁸ In other words, the principle of incorporative trinitarianism for the “mature” that we have been tracing here itself leads to a reconfiguration of thought about the “placing” of the Spirit in relation to Father and Son; and moreover we now see that this incorporative and overflowing trinitarian logic is entirely of a piece with the other distinctive features of the *Song*’s implicit theology. As Giulio Maspero has argued in more than one publication of late, we have here a certain breakthrough in Gregory’s trinitarian logic, pressing towards some reorientation of his notion of intra-trinitarian procession, a suggestion that the

47 See *Cant* IV (GNO VI 107–108; tr. Norris 118–121). For a detailed discussion of this passage and its significance for the seemingly-problematic language of ‘mingling’ as used by Gregory for the relation of the human and the divine in Christ, see my article, “‘Mingling’ in Gregory of Nyssa’s Christology: A Reconsideration”, in: A. Schuele—G. Thomas (eds.), *Who is Jesus Christ for Us Today? Pathways to Contemporary Christology* (a Festschrift for Michael Welker), Louisville (KY) 2009, 72–84. I argue here that it is anachronistic to judge Nyssen as “heterodox” from the standpoint of a later Chalcedonian orthodoxy on the basis of his language of “mingling”.

48 ὁ τοίνυν ἐκ μὲν νηπίου [...] δεκτικὸς δὲ τῆς τοῦ πνεύματος δόξης γενόμενος δι’ ἀπαθείας καὶ καθαρότητος [...]. *Cant* xv (GNO VI 467; tr. Norris 496–497).

principle of “*archē*” must be in some sense receptive as well as originate.⁴⁹ What I might want to add to that insight, in closing my analysis here, is that it is not a coincidence that this last development in Gregory’s trinitarian thinking comes at the end of a *Commentary* in which he has submitted himself, and his readership, to a new, and different, form of trinitarian thinking in total—one not forged on a “flat plane” looking outwards to the sceptic or heretic, but one looking inwards into the Church and concocted out of the ascending, progressivist task of ever deeper incorporation into the life of God. If then this passage at the end of *Homilies* disturbs our usual presumptions about what an “Eastern” (and specifically “Cappadocian”) view of the Trinity should look like, the deeper story is not so much that “Eastern” and “Western” approaches are after all closer than was thought (even though this is true),⁵⁰ but more significantly that questions of “relation” and “procession” in the Trinity look different from the perspective of mature, experienced, incorporation by the Spirit into the life of God.⁵¹

5 Conclusions and Remaining Contentions: the Song Commentary and the Transformation of Trinitarian Discourse

Let me now come to some brief conclusions and a recapitulation of what I have, and have not, argued in this short essay.

49 See the important discussions of this passage in G. Maspero, *Trinity and Man: Gregory of Nyssa’s Ad Ablabium*, Leiden 2007, 180–191; and in Id., “The Fire, the Kingdom and the Glory: The Creator Spirit and the Intra-Trinitarian Processions in the *Adversus Macedonianos* of Gregory of Nyssa”, in: V.H. Drecoll—M. Berghaus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarianism*, Leiden 2011, 229–276. The viewpoint expressed here has of course not gone uncriticized, especially by those committed to the so-called “Eastern” form of patristic trinitarianism: see G.D. Panagopoulos, “Die Vermittlung des Sohnes beim ewigen Ausgang des heiligen Geistes aus dem Vater nach Gregor von Nyssa *Ad Ablabium* (GNO III/1, 55, 21–56; tr. Müller 10)”, in: *ibidem*, 383–397.

50 See Lewis Ayres’s overall convincing theory of the “pro-Nicene” approach to the Trinity that conjoins both “Eastern” and “Western” patristic forms, in his *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, Oxford 2004. A discerning assessment of Ayres’s approach from both Orthodox and Catholic perspectives can be found in *The God of Nicaea: Disputed Questions in Patristic Trinitarianism*, a special issue of *Harvard Theological Review* 100, Cambridge 2007.

51 This is not an insight that is restricted to Nyssen. I trace the history of such an “incorporative” view of the Trinity, East and West, and its implications for the ecumenical *filioque* issue, in my 2016 Duquesne Holy Spirit lecture: “Beyond the *filioque* disputes? Re-assessing the radical equality of the Spirit through the ascetic and mystical tradition” (forthcoming).

The main burden of my argument has simply been Gregory's own: that he is combining in his *Song* commentary a particular coordination of apophatic speech and what he calls "enigmas", and this has important and novel implications for the form of trinitarianism he here espouses. Coming straight from his earlier treatises on the Trinity, especially the *Ad Ablabium* and cognate writings and the *Contra Eunonian* texts, we may be forgiven for scarcely recognizing what Gregory is now up to. No longer is he concerned to expound how the three persons can also be one, or how the so-called "economy" reveals the immanent life of God without abrogating those same rules of theological grammar. Instead, taking those apologetic discourses as read, he "free associates" exegetically, scattering a seemingly chaotic range of loose trinitarian images in his wake. But if, on first inspection, this "looks like carelessness", such is in fact a false rendition; instead Gregory now regards himself as freed up to discourse trinitarianly in a new mode, suitable to the higher slopes of Christian ascent and to the deeper understanding of the mystical body of Christ's church. Thus, as I have argued along the way, the *Song* deserves not only to be taken seriously as a source for Gregory's trinitarian thought, but it actually changes the vision of the Trinity to be gleaned from Gregory's earlier trinitarian writings in some significant ways: by its deliberate profusion of new metaphors for the Trinity; by the shift of emphasis away from a consistently ordered hierarchy or *taxis* (Father-Son-Spirit) to a dialectical "adoptive child of God" incorporation via the Spirit into union with Christ; by the conjoined emphasis on Christological "mingling", for the individual and for the church as a whole; and by his final vision of the Spirit as "bond" of unity between Father and Son, subtly transforming thereby the idea of causality within the immanent Trinity.

There are, of course, remaining problems here which exercised us repeatedly in the discussions in the context of the Rome colloquium at which this paper was originally delivered: in particular, the implications—from the perspective of later Chalcedonian orthodoxy—of a Christology of "mingling", and the difficulty of accounting for the *relationship* of this new trinitarian vision to the very different genre of discourse about the Trinity that the better-known apologetic works enshrine. These problems may, or may not, be insuperable doctrinally (although I have indicated here that I myself believe Gregory's position to be fully tenable theologically). But what I hope I have sketched suggestively in this paper is at least a provocative account of what trinitarianism might look like *in via*, up the demanding slopes of ascetic transformation to which the *Song*, according to Gregory, calls all its Christian readers.

Bibliography

- Ayres, L. *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, Oxford 2004.
- Behr, J. *The Nicene Faith. Part Two: One of the Holy Trinity*, Crestwood (NY) 2004.
- Cadenhead, R.A. "Corporeality and Desire: A Diachronic Study of Gregory of Nyssa's Ascetical Theology", Cambridge Ph.D., 2013.
- Coakley, S. "The Eschatological Body: Gender, Transformation and God", *Modern Theology* 16 (2000) 61–73;
- Coakley, S. "Introduction—Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of *The Song*", in: Ead. (ed.), *Rethinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Malden 2003, 1–14;
- Coakley, S. (ed.) *The God of Nicaea: Disputed Questions in Patristic Trinitarianism*, a special issue of *Harvard Theological Review* 100, Cambridge 2007;
- Coakley, S. "'Mingling' in Gregory of Nyssa's Christology: A Reconsideration", in: A. Schuele—G. Thomas (eds.), *Who is Jesus Christ for Us Today? Pathways to Contemporary Christology* (a Festschrift for Michael Welker), Louisville (KY) 2009, 72–84;
- Coakley, S. "Gregory of Nyssa", in: P.L. Gavrilyuk—S. Coakley (eds.), *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, Cambridge 2012, 36–55;
- Coakley, S. *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'*, Cambridge 2013;
- Coakley, S. "Beyond the *filioque* disputes? Re-assessing the radical equality of the Spirit through the ascetic and mystical tradition", forthcoming.
- Daniélou, J. *Platonisme et théologie mystique: Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1944¹, 1953².
- Daniélou, J. "La chronologie des œuvres de Grégoire de Nysse", *Studia Patristica* 7 (1966) 159–169.
- Harrison, V.E.F. "A Gender Reversal in Gregory of Nyssa's First Homily on the *Song of Songs*", *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993) 34–38.
- Heil, G.—A.M. Ritter (eds.). *De Mystica Theologia, Corpus Dionysiacum* 11, Berlin 1991.
- Laird, M. *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence*, Oxford 2004.
- Langerbeck, H. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera: VI. In Canticum Canticorum*, Leiden 1960.
- Ludlow, M. *Gregory of Nyssa: Ancient and (Post)Modern*, Oxford 2007.
- Maspero, G. *Trinity and Man: Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabium*, Leiden 2007;
- Maspero, G. "The Fire, the Kingdom and the Glory: The Creator Spirit and the Intra-Trinitarian Processions in the *Adversus Macedonianos* of Gregory of Nyssa", in: V.H. Drecoll—M. Berghaus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism*, Leiden 2011, 229–276
- Norris Jr., R.A. *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012.
- Panagopoulos, G.D. "Die Vermittlung des Sohnes beim ewigen Ausgang des heiligen

Geistes aus dem Vater nach Gregor von Nyssas *Ad Ablabium* (GNO III/1, 55, 21–56; tr. Müller 10)”, in: V.H. Drecoll—M. Berghaus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism*, Leiden 2011, 383–397.

Suchla, B.R. (ed.). *Corpus Dionysiacum* 1, Berlin 1990.

PART 2

Supporting Studies



Der Zugang zum Unzugänglichen und die radikale Begrenztheit eines Analogieschlusses von der Oikonomia auf die Theologia beim Hl. Gregor von Nyssa

Theodoros Alexopoulos

Anhand einer der wichtigsten und umfangreichsten exegetischen Schriften des Hl. Gregor von Nyssa, des Hohenliedes, versuche ich mit diesem Beitrag, der Frage des Zugangs des geschaffenen Seins zu Gott und der des Verhältnisses zwischen „*Oikonomia*“, und der „*Theologia*“ nachzugehen. Wie gelangt man eigentlich zu Gott, wenn Er dem Verständnis Gregors nach weder durch die sinnliche Wahrnehmung noch durch die Tätigkeit des Intellekts (νοῦς) erreicht wird? Denn er übersteigt jegliche Fassbarkeit den Ausführungen Gregors nach¹: „Wer könnte sich das Gute vorstellen, das ihm (schon) entzogen ist? Wie würde man das, was unaussprechlich ist, zu Augen bekommen? Wir kennen keine besondere Aussageweise zur Bezeichnung dieser Schönheit. Es gibt kein Vorbild des Gesuchten innerhalb des (Bereiches) des Seienden; und es ist unmöglich, dass man Es mittels eines Vergleiches (mit etwas Anderem) darstellt.“²

Sich Vorstellungen von Gott zu machen, Ihn in Worte zu fassen und in Form einer ‚Lehre‘ vorzutragen bedeutet den Versuch vonseiten des Menschen, sich über Gottes Unfassbarkeit hinwegzusetzen. Das ist aber ein Unternehmen, das nach Gregor sicherlich durch begrenztes Erfassungsvermögen gekennzeichnet ist. Dies stellt sich aus der Auslegung des Hohenliedes deutlich heraus: Die ganze Lehre von der unsagbaren Natur ist, auch wenn sie oft einen gottgeziemenden und hohen Gedanken auszudrücken scheint ‚Gold-Imitation‘, nicht das eigentliche ‚Gold‘. Denn es ist unmöglich, das Gute, das jenseits der Vorstellung liegt, mit Genauigkeit darzustellen. Selbst wenn jemand Paulus wäre, der im Paradies in die Geheimnisse eingeweiht wurde, und wenn er unsagbare Worte gehört hätte – die Gedanken über Gott bleiben unaussprechlich;

1 Vgl. *Cant* III (GNO VI 87, 2–5); *Cant* VI (GNO VI 181,19–182,1); *Cant* XI (GNO 323, 3–9); *Cant* XI (GNO 325, 26–326, 5). Siehe dazu F. Dünzl: *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993, 293–305.

2 *Virg* X (GNO VIII/1 289,15–19).

denn unsagbar, heißt es seien die Worte dieser Gedanken.³ „[...] Für uns, die wir jenen Schatz nicht betrachten können, scheint alles (was vom Gott gesagt wird), ‚Gold‘ zu sein; für die aber, die zur Wahrheit aufzublicken vermögen sind es ‚Gold-Imitationen‘ und kein ‚Gold‘ das zwischen den feinen Punkten des ‚Silbers‘ durchscheint.“⁴

Die Möglichkeiten des Menschen, die göttliche Natur zu erfassen, sind also äußerst beschränkt: Direkt sagen zu können, wie Gott sich der Natur nach verhält, sind wir nicht fähig, direkt zu sagen, wie es sich mit Gott der Natur nach verhält (αὐτὸν μὲν εἰπεῖν ὅπως ἔχει φύσεως ἀδυνατοῦμεν).⁵ Diese Unfassbarkeit Gottes, welche durch das Absprechen jeglicher Grenze,⁶ von der alles Seiende umschrieben ist, gekennzeichnet ist, bedeutet dessen radikale Transzendenz. Diese konkretisiert sich in der abgründigen und unüberbrückbaren Kluft zwischen dem Ungeschaffenen (Ἄκτιστον: Bereich des über das Seiende Hinausliegenden) und dem Geschaffenen (Κτιστόν: Bereich des Seienden), – eine Unterscheidung, welche überall in den Schriften und besonders im Hohelied vorhanden ist. Zwischen beiden Bereichen erkennt die Hl. Schrift kein Mittleres, „so dass man auf die Idee kommen würde es gebe im Grenzbereich zwischen Geschaffenem und Ungeschaffenem irgendeine neu eingeführte eigenartige Form von Natur, mitten zwischen diesen so dass sie an beidem Anteil hat und doch keins von beidem vollkommen ist.“⁷ Denn es ist nicht möglich, irgendeine Vermischung und Verbindung des Gegensätzlichen zu erdenken, des Geschaffenen mit dem Ungeschaffenen, wobei auch zwei Gegensätze zusammengemengt und zu einer Hypostase zusammengemischt würden, so dass das, was durch diese fremdartige Mischung gebildet würde, nicht nur zusammengesetzt ist, sondern sogar eine Zusammensetzung aus Ungleichen und im Hinblick auf die Zeit nicht zueinander Passenden hätte.“⁸

3 2 Cor 12.4. *Cant* III (GNO VI 85,16–86,1; Übers. von F. Dünzl, *Gregor von Nyssa. In Canticum Cantorum Homiliae*, Fontes Christiani 16, Freiburg 1994, 3. Bde, I, 225).

4 *Cant* III (GNO VI 86,6–10; Dünzl, 227,3–8).

5 Vgl. *Cant* III (GNO VI 86,4–5). Vgl. auch *Cant* XII (GNO VI 358,2–3).

6 Vgl. *Cant* V (GNO VI 157, 14–19 Langerbeck).

7 Vgl. *Cant* VI (GNO VI 174,1–5). Über die sogenannte Unterscheidung zwischen Κτιστόν-Ἄκτιστον siehe den klassischen Beitrag von A.A. Mosshammer, „The Created and the Uncreated in Gregory of Nyssa *Contra Eunomium* I 270–295 (GNO I, 105–113)“, in: M. Brugarolas (ed.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium I. An English Translation with Supporting Studies*, Leiden 2018, 384–411 und kurzlich: X. Batllo, „Une évolution de Grégoire? La distinction du κτιστόν/ἄκτιστον du CE I au CE III“, in: J. Leemans – M. Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa. Contra Eunomium III. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Leuven 14–17 Sept. 2010)*, Leiden – Boston 2014, 489–500.

8 *Maced* (GNO III/1 104, 8–15). Übers. (wenig geändert) nach V.H. Drecoll, in: V.H. Drecoll –

Dieser abgründige Abstand zwischen dem Geschaffenen und Ungeschaffenen wird immer beibehalten, trotz des andauernden Wachstums der Seele und ihres Emporsteigens zum Göttlichen: „Wenn die göttliche Natur ... die menschliche Seele zur Teilhabe an ihr hinzuzieht, überragt sie die partizipierende (Seele) immer im gleichen Maß entsprechend ihrer Überlegenheit in Hinsicht auf das Bessere: denn die Seele wird zwar durch die Partizipation am Überragenden andauernd größer als zuvor und kommt im Wachstum nicht zum Stillstand, das Gute aber, an dem partizipiert wird, bleibt ebenso im gleichen Zustand, weil es von der immer mehr partizipierenden (Seele) ständig in gleicher Überlegenheit vorgefunden wird.“⁹ Wenn die innere Begrenztheit¹⁰ des geschaffenen Seins sowie die radikale Transzendenz Gottes jeden direkten Zugriff des Menschen auf das Wesen Gottes unmöglich macht, wie kann man sich dann einen Zugang zu Gott verschaffen?

Dem Verständnis Gregors nach kann am geschaffenen und begrenzten Sein etwas gefasst werden, was einen Rückschluss auf die Existenz Gottes zulässt. Dieser Rückschluss hat aber einen deutlich begrenzten Charakter. Er ist nicht erschöpfend, d. h. er kann uns zu keinem sicheren Schluss oder Wissen über das Wesen Gottes führen! Dieser Gedanke wird vom Gregor im Hohenlied hervorgehoben: Der Mensch verschafft sich eine nicht ganz klare, eine eher schattenhafte Vorstellung von Gott, weil es von Ihm nur Spuren und Funken seiner Existenz gibt: „aufgrund von Spuren und Funken zielt unsere Vernunft nach dem Unbekannten und errät durch das Fassbare das Unfassbare aufgrund einer Analogie. Denn – was für einen kennzeichnenden Begriff auch immer wir uns ausdenken für das ‚Salböl‘ der Gottheit, sagt sie (sc. die Braut)– wir bezeichnen mit der Bedeutung des Gesagten nicht das ‚Salböl‘ selbst, sondern zeigen mit dem theologischen Begriffen einen kleinen Rest vom ‚Dampf des göttlichen Wohlgeruchs‘ auf. [...] aufgrund eines Rückstands von undeutlicher Beschaf-

M. Berghaus (eds.) *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarianism. Proceedings of the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa* (Tübingen 17–20 Sept. 2008), Leiden – Boston 2011, 58–59.

9 *Cant V* (GNO VI 158,12–19; Dünzl, 335).

10 Die radikale Begrenztheit wird vom Gregor durch den Begriff des „διάστημα“ zum Ausdruck gebracht. Das „διάστημα“ wird mit der Idee der Schöpfung in Verbindung gesetzt: „τὸ διάστημα οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ κτίσις ἐστίν“. Vgl. *Eccl VII* (GNO V 412,14). Zum Begriff des Diastema siehe: P. Verghese „Διάστημα und Διάστασις in Gregory of Nyssa. Introduction to a concept and the posing of a Problem“, in: H. Dörrie – M. Altenburger – U. Schram (eds.), *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie*, Leiden 1976, 243–260; P. Plass, „Transcendent time and eternity in Gregory of Nyssa“, *VigChr* 34 (1980) 180–192; T. Alexopoulos: *Τὸ „εἶναι“ κατὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν τοῦ Ἀγίου Γρηγορίου Νύσσης*, Athens 2008, 183–215.

fenheit, der von den Dämpfen (des Salböls) im Gefäß zurückblieb, stellen wir eine Vermutung über das ausgeleerte Öl an.“¹¹

Jede in der menschlichen Seele entstandene Vermutung von Gott stellt also nur im Spiegel und im Rätsel einen Widerschein des Gesuchten im Umriss dar, sie erweist sich als unfähig, das Göttliche gedanklich zu umschreiben,¹² zu erfassen. Jedes erklärende Wort scheint nur ein kleiner Punkt zu sein, weil es sich nicht mit der Breite des Gedankens zugleich mit ausdehnen kann.¹³ Das menschliche Denken erjagt also manche Funken (ἐναύσματά τινα πρὸς τὴν κατανόησιν τοῦ ζητουμένου θηρεύοντες)¹⁴ und versucht aufzuspüren (ἱχνεύοντες) soweit es möglich ist, (καθ’ ὅσον δυνατόν),¹⁵ was Gott hinter sich lässt.

Derselbe Gedanke eines begrenzten Analogieschlusses von der Oikonomia auf die Theologia führt Gregor weiter in der fünften Homilie aus. Hier ist der Funken, von dem das menschliche Erkenntnis-Vermögen angezündet wird, die Stimme des Herrn und nicht sein Gesicht. Die Stimme ruft eher eine Vermutung als eine sichere Erkenntnisdarüber hervor, wer es ist, der da spricht¹⁶ „Dass nämlich das¹⁷ Gesagte eher einer Vermutung gleicht und nicht einer unzweideutigen Gewissheit des Erfassens, ist daraus offensichtlich, dass der Text sich nicht auf einen Gedanken festlegt und auch nicht eine Gestalt in den Blick nimmt, sondern über vielerlei hinwegeilt in den Gesichtern.“¹⁸ In seinem Streben und Suchen nach Gott ist also der Mensch einer gewissen Paradoxie begegnet: Das Gesuchte ist zugleich anwesend und nicht anwesend. Einerseits meldet es seine Gegenwart an, enthüllt sich, indem es bestimmte Zeichen seines Daseins gewährt, andererseits bleibt es in einer gewissen Hinsicht der Erfassungsmöglichkeiten des menschlichen Intellekts radikal verborgen. Das ist genau das ontologische Mysterium, mit dem sich die menschliche Seele immer abfinden muss. Das wahrhaftig Seiende enthüllt sich nur auf eine indirekte Weise. „Es gewährt der Seele eine Art Wahrnehmung seiner Gegenwart, entzieht sich aber dem deutlicheren Verstehen, indem es sich in der Unsichtbarkeit seiner Natur verbirgt.“¹⁹ „Wie sollen wir also Gott erkennen, Ihn, der

11 *Cant* I (GNO VI 36,20–37,1–7.9–11; Dünzl, 149).

12 *Cant* III (GNO VI 86,15–18).

13 Vgl. *Cant* III (GNO VI 86,19–87,5).

14 *Eun* II 146 (GNO I 267,27–28).

15 *Eun* II 145 (GNO I 270,26–271,2).

16 *Cant* V (GNO VI 139,1–4).

17 In Ct 2.8–9b.

18 *Cant* V (GNO VI 139,4–10; Dünzl, 305).

19 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 324,10–12): αἰσθησιν τινα δίδωσι τῇ ψυχῇ τῆς παρουσίας ἐκφεύγει δὲ τὴν ἐναργῆ κατανόησιν τῷ ἀοράτῳ τῆς φύσεως ἐγκρυπτόμενος.

durch kein Kennzeichen, das als Merkmal dienen könnte, zu finden ist? Er hört weder, wenn er gerufen wird, noch wird man seiner habhaft, wenn man ihn sucht.“²⁰

Gregor gibt uns eine deutlich theologische Antwort, dessen Inhalt bis auf den hesychastischen Streit des 14ten Jahrhunderts breitere Auswirkungen haben soll. Das einzige Kennzeichen, das als Merkmal zur Erkenntnis Gottes dienen könnte, ergibt sich aus Gottes Nach-Außen-Treten in den Bereich des Seins und dies ist nichts anderes als die göttliche Wirkung – *Energeia*, welche die menschliche vielgeschäftige Wissbegier befriedigt. Dazu äußert sich Gregor: „Aber obwohl die Seele alle Überlegungen und alle forschende Kraft der Gedanken aufbringt und sich wissbegierig abmüht, das Gesuchte zu erfassen macht sie das (göttliche) Wirken, das allein bis zu uns herabsteigt, zur Grenze im Erfassen Gottes. Denn dieses Wirken nehmen wir in unserem Leben wahr.“²¹ Gregor verdeutlicht, was der Seele, die das Göttliche durchforscht, zustößt: „Sobald sie sich aus dem Bereich der unteren Dingen ausstreckt zur Erkenntnis des Höherliegenden, vermag sie, nachdem sie die Wunder Gottes Wirkens erfasst hat, nicht weiter voranzukommen durch die bis dahin betriebene Wissbegier. Vielmehr bewundert und verehrt sie den, dem man lediglich durch das, was er wirkt, als existent erkennt.“²²

Die *Energeia* wird also zur Erkenntnisgrenze des menschlichen Intellekts und gewährt ihm einen sicherlich begrenzten Zugang zum Erfassen Gottes. Sie erlaubt dem Menschen einen gewissen Rückschluss auf das Dasein Gottes, nicht aber auf sein Wie-Sein.²³

Die Idee eines begrenzten Analogieschlusses von der *Oikonomia* auf das innere – Sein des Absoluten – Gottes (*Theologia*), der nichts anderes als eine Auslegung der Wirksamkeit des Absoluten auf das geschaffene Sein ist, stellt eine Idee, welche tief in der kappadozischen Seins-Lehre verwurzelt ist, dar. So genau wie Gregor führt Basilius aus, dass der Schöpfer in jeden kleinen Teil des geschaffenen Seins eine klare Spur seiner Weisheit hineingelegt (τῆς μεγάλης αὐτοῦ σοφίας ἐναργὲς ἵχνος ἐνέθηκε)²⁴ und seinen heiligen Worten (sc. der Schrift) in verborgener Weise manche Spuren und Abdrücke seiner unaussprechlichen Natur unterlegt habe (ἵχνη τινὰ καὶ ἐμφάσεις ὑποβάλλει τοῦ ἀπορ-

20 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 379,11–13).

21 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 334,3–9; Dünzl, 603): πάντας δὲ λογισμοὺς καὶ πᾶσαν ἐρευνητικὴν νοημάτων δύναμιν ἀνακινούσα καὶ περιεργαζομένη καταλαβεῖν τὸ ζητούμενον ὅρον ποιεῖται τῆς καταλήψεως τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν ἐνέργειαν μόνην τὴν μέχρις ἡμῶν κατιοῦσαν, ἥς διὰ τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν αἰσθανόμεθα.

22 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 334,15–335,1; Dünzl, 602–605).

23 Vgl. *Beat* VI (GNO VII/2 141,25–27).

24 Vgl. Basilius, *Hex* VII 5 (SC 26 416); *Hex* IX 4 (SC 26 500).

ρήτου).²⁵ Diese Abdrücke der Gegenwart Gottes, die den Seienden eingepägt sind, sind nichts anderes als das Ergebnis der göttlichen Wirkungen, welche bis zu uns herabsteigen, während die Ousia in ihrer radikalen Einfachheit absolut unfassbar bleibt.²⁶

Der gleichen Vorstellung von einem beschränkten Zugang vonseiten des Menschen zum Göttlichen ist man bei Gregor dem Theologen begegnet. Gregor unterscheidet in der Gottheit zwischen einer ersten und vermischten Natur, die nur von sich selbst erkannt wird und jener, die bis zu uns gelangt, jener Majestät, die sich in den Geschöpfen offenbart oder, wie sie der göttliche David nennt, die Herrlichkeit Gottes. Das sei nämlich die Rückseite Gottes, sie (seien) seine Erkennungszeichen (beim Vorübergehen) aus der Rückschau, etwa wie die Schatten der Sonnenspiegelungen über den Wassern unseren schwachen Augen die Sonne anzeigen, weil wir sie selbst nicht schauen können, da ihr ungemildertes Licht unsere Fassungskraft übersteigt.²⁷

Es gibt also nach Gregor „etwas“ (d. h. das göttliche Wesen) von der Gottheit, was dem Intellekt immer verborgen bleibt, und dem, was bis zu uns herabsteigt und sich in den geschaffenen Dingen erkennen lässt.²⁸ Trotz dieser natürlichen Offenbarung ist das, was (uns) enthüllt ist, nichts anderes als Schatten und Bilder, welche uns keine sichere Erkenntnis über die Wahrheit verschaffen können. Das, was der Intellekt wahrnehmen kann und fähig ist, sich manche Vorstellungen über Gott zu bilden, ergibt sich aus der Auslegung dessen, was „um Gott herum ist“ (τὰ περὶ αὐτὸν) (Gott umgibt) und nicht dessen, was Gott ist, d. h. es ist trüb und schwer zu erkennen, ein Abbild, Schatten der Wahrheit, nicht die Wahrheit selbst, ein Trugbild, das, bevor es ergriffen wurde, schon der deutlichen Wahrnehmung entzogen und, bevor es gedacht wurde, schon davongeeilt ist.²⁹ „Wir machen uns eine Skizze von dem, was er (Gott) ist, nach

25 Vgl. Basilius, *Hex* 11 3; *Hex* 11 2–3 (SC 26 152; 148).

26 Vgl. *Epistula* 234, 1, PG 32, 869AB.

27 Gregor von Nazianz, *Oratio* 28, 3 (SC 250 106,15–18; Übers. nach J. Barbel, *Die Fünf Theologischen Reden*, 69, wenig geändert): τῆς πρώτης τε καὶ ἀκράτου φύσεως τῆς ἐαυτῇ γιγνωσκομένης καὶ ὁσης τοῦ πρώτου καταπετάσματος εἶσω μένει καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν χερουβὶμ συγκαλύπτεται, καὶ ἐκείνης, ἥτις εἰς ἡμᾶς φθάνει καὶ ἐστὶ ἢ ἐν τοῖς κτίσμασι φανερωθεῖσα μεγαλειότης ἢ, ὡς ὁ θεὸς Δαυὶδ ὀνομάζει, μεγαλοπρέπεια. Ταῦτα γὰρ εἰσὶ, ἀναφέρει ὁ πολὺς τῇ θεολογίᾳ Γρηγόριος, τοῦ Θεοῦ τὰ ὀπίσθια, ὅσα μετ' ἐκείνου ἐκείνου γνωρίσματα, ὥσπερ αἱ καθ' ὑδάτων σκιαὶ καὶ εἰκόνες ταῖς σαθραῖς ὕψει παραδεικνύουσιν τὸν ἥλιον, ἐπεὶ μὴ αὐτὸν προσβλέπειν οἶόν τε, τῷ ἀκραίφνει τοῦ φωτὸς νικῶντα τὴν αἴσθησιν.

28 Vgl. Gregor von Nazianz, *Oratio* 28, 3 (SC 250 104,8–106,11).

29 Vgl. Gregor von Nazianz, *Oratio* 38, 7 (SC 358 116,8–12): νῶ μόνῳ σκιαγραφούμενος (sc. ὁ θεός) καὶ τούτῳ λίαν ἀμυδρῶς καὶ μετρίως, οὐκ ἐκ τῶν κατ' αὐτόν, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν περὶ αὐτόν, ἄλλης ἐξ ἄλλου φαντασίας συλλεγομένης, εἰς ἔν τι τῆς ἀληθείας ἵνδαλμα, πρὶν κρατηθῆναι φεῦγον καὶ πρὶν νοηθῆναι διαδιδράσκον ...

dem, was ihn umgibt, und wir tragen ein trübes und schwaches, vom anderen verschiedenes Phantasiebild zusammen“.³⁰

Die Idee der indirekten, durch die Schöpfung vermittelten Gotteserkenntnis als Grundzug der kappadozischen Metaphysik hat eine deutlich ausgewiesene Parallele zur philosophischen Spekulation des Neuplatonismus, sowohl des früheren als auch des späteren. Der Zugang zum absoluten Einen ist den neoplatonischen Denkern nach kein direkter, sondern geschieht „auf dem Umweg über die Betrachtung des Seienden in seinem Grundcharakter als Einheit, in dem sich sein Sein konstituiert.“³¹ Jedes Seiende trägt nach Plotin in sich etwas von dem absoluten Einen, so dass auch jedes von den Dingen nach dem Ersten in sich eine Art Gestalt von ihm habe³² als ob es um seine Form in ihm gäbe, sodass das Sein eine Spur des Einen ist,³³ was die Abkünftigkeit des Einheitscharakters alles Seienden aus dem Einen erweist.³⁴ Der Überstieg über das Sein auf das Eine hin, wird allererst ermöglicht und vorbereitet durch die Betrachtung des Seienden in seinem Einheitscharakter, d. h. durch die Auslegung der Spur, die das Absolute in jedes Seiende hineingestreut hat. Aus demselben Blickwinkel betrachtet die Sache Proklos in seiner platonischen Theologie, in der die Idee in den Vordergrund gestellt wird, nämlich dass „der Verursacher aller Seienden Spuren und Zeichen seiner absoluten Transzendenz in alles hinein gestreut und alles durch diese (Spuren und Zeichen) um sich selbst herum gegründet hat, und dass er in allem auf unaussprechlicher Weise anwesend ist, zugleich selbst über alles erhaben bleibt.“³⁵ Der Zugang zum Absoluten erfolgt nur durch das, was Es uns gewährt, d. h. durch seine gütige Gabe-Wirkung (Energeia), welche bis zu uns herabsteigt. Auf dieser zu uns herabsteigenden Wirkung sich stützend, sind wir in der Lage, dem Absoluten die Namen des Einen oder des Guten zuzuschreiben oder allgemein Aussagen über es zu machen.³⁶ Alles was über Gott ausgesagt wird, ist letzten Endes eine Auslegung und Deutung dessen, was Er den Seienden reichlich gibt und was Er an sie ausendet.

30 Gregor von Nazianz, *Oratio* 30, 17 (SC 250 262, 11–13; J. Barbel, 207, wenig geändert): Ἐκ τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν (τὸν Θεόν) σκιαγραφούντες τὰ κατ’ αὐτόν, ἀμυδράν τινα καὶ ἀσθενῆ καὶ ἄλλην ἀπ’ ἄλλου φαντασίαν συλλέγομεν.

31 J. Halfwassen, *Der Aufstieg zum Einen, Untersuchungen zu Platon und Plotin*, Stuttgart 1992, 37.

32 Vgl. *Enn.* V 5, 5, 10–11: ἕκαστον μὲν τῶν μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον ἔχει τι ἐκείνου οἷον εἶδος ἐν αὐτῷ.

33 Vgl. ebd. 13–14: ὥστ’ εἶναι τὸ εἶναι ἕχνος τοῦ ἐνός. Vgl. auch *Enn.* III 8, 11–19–23. Dazu J. Halfwassen, *Der Aufstieg zum Einen*, 37–38.

34 Vgl. J. Halfwassen, *Der Aufstieg zum Einen*, 37.

35 Proclus, *Theologia platonica*, II 8 (56, 17–20 Saffrey – Westerink).

36 Vgl. *ibidem*, II 8 (60, 23–25 Saffrey – Westerink): τὸ μὲν οὖν ἐν καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐκ τῆς εἰς ἅπαντα τὰ ὄντα καθηκούσης ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ δόσεως ἐπ’ αὐτό μετήγομεν.

Diesem unerschütterlichen Festhalten an der radikalen Transzendenz der göttlichen Wesenheit, das einen Grundzug der kappadozischen Theologie darstellt, ist man bei der byzantinischen Metaphysik, und zwar bei dem großen Photios von Konstantinopel begegnet. Photios betont traditionsgemäß, dass die göttliche Wesenheit absolut unerkennbar ist. Weder ein Engel noch irgendein Mensch hat diese Wesenheit erkannt noch wird er sie jemals erkennen. Sie steht über jedem Intellekt, jedem Gedanken und jenseits jeglichen Verstehens (κατάληψις).³⁷ Die rechtmäßigen Zuschreibungen Gottes, wie z.B. Anfangslosigkeit, Endlosigkeit, Ewigkeit, usw. sind keine Charakteristika der göttlichen Wesenheit selbst, sondern notwendige Folgerungen aus der Art und Weise ihrer Anwesenheit. Es gibt kein Bild, keine Bestimmung und kein Begriff von Gott an sich. Alles wird Gott aus dem Horizont des Seins zugeschrieben als Auslegung dessen, was seiner Wirksamkeit in der Welt folgt. Gott wird definiert aus dem, was der göttlichen Wesenheit im Nachhinein, danach folgt (ἐκ τῶν ὑστέρων) als aus einem trüben Glanz, hervortretend aus dem Transzendenten Gott, der bis zu uns herabsteigt.³⁸ Von diesem „Glanz“ vermag man eine gottgebührende Vorstellung (θεοπρεπῆς φαντασία) prägen.³⁹

Gott lässt zu, dass man in der Schöpfung seine Herrlichkeit (δόξα) mittels Symbolen, Spuren und Vorbildern (σύμβολα, ἵχνη, τύποι, ἐμφάσεις) erkennt.⁴⁰ Symbole, Spuren und göttliche Worte gewähren Zeugnis von der göttlichen Wesenheit, Kraft und Energie, insoweit sie untrennbar voneinander und von der Gottheit sind.⁴¹ Sie vermitteln aber eine begrenzte Erkenntnis Gottes. Photios erklärt es wie folgt: „Wie diejenigen, die in eine dichte Finsternis festgesetzt sind, nur einen kurzen und trübfahnen Schein der Sonnenstrahlen empfangen, so sind diejenigen, die mit dem Fleisch bedeckt sind fähig, aus jenem Glanz der noetischen Sonne und aus ihrem Verlangen und Erforschung, indem sie

37 Vgl. Photius, *Amphilochia* 119 (BSGRT, Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani epistulae et Amphilochia, 2, 185,57–58 Westerink).

38 Vgl. Photius, *Amphilochia* 180 (BSGRT, Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani epistulae et Amphilochia, 5, 232,5–6 Westerink). Das ist ein Berührungspunkt zwischen Photios und dem Neuplatonismus. Siehe dazu T. Alexopoulos, „Areopagitic influence and neoplatonic (Plotinian) echoes in Photius' Amphilochia: question 180“, *BZ* 107/1 (2014) 1–36, bes. 12–13.

39 Vgl. Photius, *Amphilochia* 180; 182 (BSGRT, Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani epistulae et Amphilochia, 5, 232 12; 239, 19 Westerink). Über die sogenannten „θεοπρεπεῖς φαντασίαι“ siehe: G. Kapriev, „Die gottgebührenden Phantasien und die Gottesschau bei Photios“, in: M.C. Pachecol – J.F. Mirinhos (eds.), *Intellect et Imagination dans la Philosophie Médiévale*, (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 11), London 2006, 473–481.

40 Vgl. Photius, *Amphilochia* 119; 181, (BSGRT, Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani epistulae et Amphilochia, 5, 235,19 Westerink); Vgl. auch, PG 101, 697BC; 892A.

41 Vgl. Photius, *Amphilochia* 181 (BSGRT, Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani epistulae et Amphilochia, 5, 235,24–25 Westerink).

manche schattenhafte Radien zu sich ziehen, sich zu manchen Gedanken und gottgebührenden Vorstellungen emporzuheben.⁴² Die gottgebührenden Vorstellungen (Phantasien), die der Erhabenheit Gottes geziemende Gedanken sind, werden in dem Maße gebildet, indem die menschliche Natur vermag, den Glanz des von oben strömenden Lichtes zu fassen.⁴³ Es geht bei den gottgebührenden Phantasien um die Erwerbung einer Erkenntnis durch Analogien (δ' ἀναλογίας γνῶσις),⁴⁴ welche die Ableitung syllogistischer Schlüsse begrenzter Gültigkeit von der Existenz Gottes möglich macht.⁴⁵

Diese Analogieschlüsse, die einen streng diskursiven Charakter haben,⁴⁶ sind von begrenzter Gültigkeit und können auf gar keinen Fall das Göttliche in seiner Ganzheit fassen.⁴⁷ Sie sind vielmehr eine Auslegung des Schattens, den die überwesenhafte Wesenheit auf die Schöpfung wirft. Alle Seienden tragen in sich Spuren dieser überwesenhaften Einheit, indem sie ihren Einheitscharakter von der Teilhabe an dem absoluten Einen erhalten, nicht freilich aber an dem überwesenhaften Einen selbst, sondern daran, was als trüber Schatten des überwesenhaften Einen begegnet.⁴⁸

Die oben dargelegten Ausführungen aus der Fundgrube der Tradition der Väter und dem neuplatonischen Denken stimmen m. E. in diesem wichtigen Punkt überein, nämlich, dass keine strikte Korrespondenz von Gottes innerem Sein (immanente Trinität) und dessen Wirkung auf die Schöpfung (ökonomische Trinität) zu erschließen ist. Zwar enthüllt sich der dreieinige Gott in seinem Nach-Außen-Treten und in einer gewissen Hinsicht, d. h. vermittleits seiner Energien den Seienden, bleibt aber zugleich in einer anderen Hinsicht, nämlich in Hinsicht auf sein Wesen für immer verborgen. Gott ist zugleich

42 Vgl. Photius, *Amphilochia* 180 (BSGRT, Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani epistulae et *Amphilochia*, 5, 232,10–16 Westerink): καθ' ὃν γὰρ τρόπον οἱ ζῳφ παχεῖ περιεχυμένῳ ἐγκαθήμενοι βραχείαν τινα τῶν ἡλιακῶν ἀκτίνων καὶ ἀμυδρὰν λαμπηδὸν παραδέχονται, οὕτως οἱ τῷ σαρκίῳ περιβεβλημένοι ἐκ τῆς ἀπαυγῆς ἐκείνης τοῦ νοητοῦ ἡλίου εἰς ἐννοιάν τινα καὶ φαντασίαν θεοπρεπῆ ὥσπερ ἀπὸ τινος κατοπτρικοῦ μηχανήματος τοῦ τε πόθου καὶ τῆς συζητήσεως σκιοφανεῖς ἀκτῖναι ἔλκοντες ἀνάγεσθαι δύνανται.

43 Vgl. Photius, *Amphilochia* 182 (BSGRT, Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani epistulae et *Amphilochia*, 5, 239,13,20–21 Westerink).

44 Vgl. Photius, *Amphilochia* 189 (BSGRT, Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani epistulae et *Amphilochia*, 5, 252,20–21; 27–28 Westerink).

45 Vgl. G. Kapriev, *Philosophie in Byzanz*, Würzburg 2005, 170 f.

46 Vgl. ebd., 170 f.

47 Vgl. Photius, *Amphilochia* 189 (BSGRT, Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani epistulae et *Amphilochia*, 5, 252,20–22 Westerink).

48 Vgl. Photius, *Amphilochia* 180 (BSGRT, Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani epistulae et *Amphilochia*, 5, 233,32–33 Westerink): σκιάν [...] ἀμυδρὰν [...] τοῦ κυρίως καὶ ὑπερουσίῳ ἐνός [...].

anwesend und nicht anwesend. Gott ist durch seine gütigen Mitteilungen, seine Einstrahlungen anwesend, die sind aber nur Abdrücke, Spuren, die Er hinter sich lässt. Der ‚Dampf‘ des göttlichen Wohlgeruchs ist, wie Gregor im Hohenlied sagt, nicht das ‚Salböl‘ selbst, sondern eine deutliche Spur der Gegenwart Gottes in der Schöpfung, die der Mensch aufgerufen ist, zu deuten. So kann Gott von den einzelnen Seienden nur im Blick auf seine Manifestationen erkannt werden und aus der Auslegung dieser Manifestationen vermag man keine sicheren Rückschlüsse auf sein inneres Sein ziehen.

Diese theologische Position, die sich aus der dargelegten Problematik ergibt, hat breitere Auswirkungen auf die Frage des Verhältnisses zwischen Theologia und Oikonomia und besonders auf die damit eng verbundene Frage des Filioque, deren Haltbarkeit sich genau auf eine direkte Korrespondenz zwischen beiden Bereichen des Seins stützt. Kann man von der geschichtlichen Sendung des Geistes (der Gaben des Geistes und nicht des Geistes selbst) durch den Sohn auf den ewigen Ursprung des Geistes direkt schließen?⁴⁹ Zu dieser Frage antwortet man, indem man sich auf Gregor und auf andere Theologen beruft: Nein. Man darf keine Betrachtungen naturphilosophischer Art von unten her für das Obere anstellen⁵⁰ belehrt uns Gregor. Viele Jahrhunderte später wird wiederum Gregorios II. Kyprios von Zypern davor warnen, dass man sich von denjenigen Leuten fern halten sollte, welche die Existenz des Schöpfers in einer ähnlichen Weise auslegen, in der die Seienden ins Sein gerufen sind.⁵¹

Bibliographie

- Alexopoulos, T. *Τὸ „εἶναι“ κατὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν τοῦ Ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Νύσσης*, Athens 2008;
- Alexopoulos, T. „Areopagitic influence and neoplatonic (Plotinian) echoes in Photius’ *Amphilochia*: Question 180“, *BZ* 107/1 (2014) 1–36.
- Batilo, X. „Une évolution de Grégoire? La distinction du *κτιστόν/ἄκτιστον* du *CE* I au *CE* 111“, in: J. Leemans – M. Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa. Contra Eunomium III. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Leuven 14–17 Sept. 2010)*, Leiden – Boston 2014, 489–500.
- Dünzl, F. *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993;

49 Siehe die dargelegte Problematik von B. Oberdorfer, „Filioque. Werbeschrift für ein Problem“, in: W. Härle – R. Preul (eds.), *Marburger Jahrbuch für Theologie* 12, Marburg 2000, 117–137; bes. 117–119.

50 *Eun* 111/2 24 (GNO II 60,9): μή ἐκ τῶν κάτω φυσιολόγει τὰ ἄνω.

51 Vgl. Gregorios von Zypern, *De processione spiritus Sancti*, PG 142, 281C.

- Dünzl, F. *Gregor von Nyssa. In Canticum Canticorum Homiliae*, Fontes Christiani 16, Freiburg 1994.
- Halfwassen, J. *Der Aufstieg zum Einen, Untersuchungen zu Platon und Plotin*, Stuttgart 1992.
- Kapriev, G. „Die gottgebührenden Phantasien und die Gottesschau bei Photios“, in: M.C. Pachecol – J.F. Mirinhos (eds.), *Intellect et Imagination dans la Philosophie Médiévale*, (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 11), London 2006, 473–481.
- Mosshammer, A.A. „The Created and the Uncreated in Gregory of Nyssa *Contra Eunomium* I 270–295 (GNO I, 105–113)“, in: M. Brugarolas (ed.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium I. An English Translation with Supporting Studies*, Leiden 2018, 384–411.
- Plass, P. „Transcendent time and eternity in Gregory of Nyssa“, *VigChr* 34 (1980) 180–192.
- Verghese, P. „Διάστημα und Διάστασις in Gregory of Nyssa. Introduction to a concept and the posing of a Problem“, in: H. Dörrie – M. Altenburger – U. Schram (eds.), *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie*, Leiden 1976, 243–260.

“If You Do Not Know Yourself, Beautiful amongst Women ...”: Human Greatness in Gregory of Nyssa and Its Influence on the Quattrocento*

Francisco Bastitta Harriet

Throughout the history of thought, there are but few occasions on which the exaltation of the human being is expressed both through the deepness of speculation and the beauty of eloquence. Some of the most illustrious pages in the world of Literature and Philosophy are devoted to the human condition. But often these two worlds have remained mutually apart over the centuries, even opposing one another, and only a few writers on this topic have achieved a synthesis between rigorous thought and elegance of speech.

The humanist movement of the Italian Quattrocento is certainly one of the most prolific periods regarding this poetic theorization of the *dignitas hominis*. But more than a thousand years before, Gregory of Nyssa may well be considered one of its most exceptional predecessors. In fact, bringing into play his outstanding talents as teacher of rhetoric, philosopher and theologian, he ingeniously couples and binds together all the riches of the Greek humanist tradition with the Biblical view of the human being as image and likeness of God, as works by Gerhart Ladner and Alden Mosshammer, among others, have demonstrated.¹

Needless to say, Gregory is not the first author to propose such a synthesis: his texts echo those of Philo, Justin, Irenaeus, Origen and Methodius. However, Nyssen's anthropological zeal and its resulting theses largely exceed the boundaries of this tradition. His unsettling discourse on human nature cannot be defined as strictly exegetical, philosophical or poetic, but all of them at once. As Martin Buber used to say about Augustine's anthropology, Gregory's humans speak in first and second person, they marvel at themselves, at their own mystery.²

* I want to express my gratitude to Claudia D'Amico and Matthieu Cassin for their valuable suggestions and comments on my paper.

1 Cf. G.B. Ladner, “The Philosophical Anthropology of Saint Gregory of Nyssa”, *DOP* 12 (1958) 59–94; A.A. Mosshammer, “Gregory of Nyssa and Christian Hellenism”, *StPat* 32 (1997) 170–195.

2 Cf. M. Buber, “What is man?”, in: R.G. Smith (ed.), *Martin Buber. Between Man and Man*, New York 2002, 151–153.

In this paper, I will analyse the theme of human greatness in Gregory of Nyssa's works—particularly, *In Canticum Canticorum* and *De opificio hominis*—and its reception in 15th century Italy.

As a matter of fact, when Gregory interprets the phrase of the *Song* 1,8 in his second homily—probably during his last years—, he is resuming the anthropological motifs of his earliest and most renowned exegetical treatise, *De opificio hominis*, completed in 379.³ His praise of human greatness reappears conspicuously in a number of humanists of the Quattrocento, who had gotten in touch with Nyssen's Greek manuscripts and their medieval translations. This tendency culminates in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and the Florentine Academy towards the end of the century.

1 Human Greatness in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa

At the end of his second homily on the *Song*, Gregory quotes and comments on the following versicle: "If you do not know yourself (ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ γνῶς σεαυτὴν), O beautiful one among women, go forth in the footsteps of the flocks and tend the kids by the flocks' tents".⁴ Although the author mentions Origen in the prologue and his exegetical influence is strong, in this and other passages Gregory noticeably departs from his readings.⁵

Like Origen before him, Nyssen conceives this self-knowledge as a withdrawal from what is transitory and as a way towards spiritual progress, but while the Adamantine tends to read the versicle as a severe admonition (*austera commotio*) and even as a threat (*comminatio*) from the Beloved, Gregory understands it merely as the offering of the surest safeguard (ἀσφαλέστατον φυλακτήριον) for her.⁶ Besides, as it will be seen, according to Nyssen, not only the soul is addressed here, but the entire human being. Upon reaching the climax of the passage, we read the following poetic praise of human greatness:

3 Cf. F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993, 30–33; J.B. Cahill, "The date and setting of Gregory of Nyssa's commentary on the Song of Songs", *JThS* 32 (1981) 447–460; J. Daniélou, "La chronologie des œuvres de Grégoire de Nysse", *StPat* 7 (1966) 159–169.

4 Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Cant* 11 (GNO VI 67,8–10; tr. Norris 73). All translations of *In Canticum* are taken from R.A. Norris Jr., *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012 (Writings from the Greco-Roman World 13), with slight changes.

5 Cf. P. Courcelle, "Connais-toi toi-même", de Socrate à Saint Bernard, Vol. 1, Paris 1974, 97–112; F. Dünzl, "Die Canticum-Exegese des Gregor von Nyssa und Origenes im Vergleich", *JAC* 36 (1993) 94–109.

6 Cf. Origen, *Comm. in Cant.* 11 5,5.29.36.39 (SC 375, 356.370.374.376); Id., *Hom. in Cant.* 19 (SC 37, 76–77); Gregory of Nyssa, *Cant* 11 (GNO VI 63,18–20).

“Have a care to yourself” (Dt 15.9), says the Word. For this is the sure safeguard of good things. Know how much more than the rest of creation you have been honoured by your Maker. Heaven did not become the image of God, nor the moon, nor the sun, nor the beautiful stars—nor a single other one of the things that appear in the created order. Only you came into existence as a copy of the Nature that transcends every intellect, a likeness of the incorruptible Beauty, an impress of the true Deity, receptacle of the blessed life, a model of that true Light, in the contemplation of which you become what it is, imitating that which shines within you by the ray that shines forth in response from your purity.⁷

Origen had suggested a divine incentive for the virtue of the soul, “both through the fear of evil as through the desire of good things” (*tam malorum metu quam desiderio bonorum*).⁸ Gregory places more clearly than his forerunner the motivation for virtue and the spiritual path, not in the fear of punishment or in the pursuit of a reward, but in the marvel and the joy at the greatness of the divine gift to humanity.⁹ And this is why he recasts the traditional “know yourself” (γνώθι σεαυτόν) in this new form: “know how much more ...” (γνώθι πόσον ὑπέρ), which immediately evokes the unlimited greatness of humanity.

Several elements in the text recall the pages of *De opificio hominis*, written around fifteen years before: the exegesis of the divine image in the human being, the marked distinction from the rest of creatures, the human pre-eminence even over the heavens, a virtual identity with God’s perfection. Basil had dealt with some of these topics in his homily *In illud: Attende tibi ipsi*, although he followed Origen more closely and was less enthusiastic than his younger brother about human nature.¹⁰ The bishop of Caesarea clearly counterbalances humanity’s greatness with its misery, in accordance with classical

7 *Cant* II (GNO VI 67,17–68,10; tr. Norris 75): “πρόσχε σεαυτῇ, φησὶν ὁ λόγος· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ ἀσφαλὲς τῶν ἀγαθῶν φυλακτήριον· γνώθι πόσον ὑπὲρ τὴν λοιπὴν κτίσιν παρὰ τοῦ πεποιηκότος τετιμησθαι. οὐκ οὐρανὸς γέγονεν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ, οὐ σελήνη, οὐχ ἥλιος, οὐ τὸ ἀστρῶν κάλλος, οὐκ ἄλλο τι τῶν κατὰ τὴν κτίσιν φαινομένων οὐδέν. μόνῃ σὺ γέγονας τῆς ὑπερεχούσης πάντα νοῦν φύσεως ἀπεικόνισμα, τοῦ ἀφθάρτου κάλλους ὁμοίωμα, τῆς ἀληθινῆς θεότητος ἀποτύπωμα, τῆς μακαρίας ζωῆς δοχεῖον, τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ φωτὸς ἐκμαγεῖον, πρὸς δὲ βλέπουσα ἐκεῖνο γίνῃ, ὅπερ ἐκεῖνός ἐστι, μιμουμένη τὸν ἐν σοὶ λάμποντα διὰ τῆς ἀντιλαμπύσης αὐγῆς ἐκ τῆς σῆς καθαρότητος”.

8 Origen, *Comm. in Cant.* II 5,3 (SC 375, 356).

9 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 15,15–16,10). See F. Bastitta Harriet, “*Radix dilectionis: asimilación y transposición de la ética clásica en Gregorio de Nisa y Agustín de Hipona*,” in: S. Filippi (ed.), *Controversias filosóficas, científicas y teológicas en el pensamiento Tardo-Antiguo y Medieval*, Rosario 2011, 81–91.

10 Cf. Basil of Caesarea, *In illud: Attende tibi ipsi* (Rudberg).

topoi, whereas in these passages Gregory focuses on the first and raises human dignity to the highest degree.¹¹

We know that far from being a mere continuation of Basil's *In Hexaëmeron*, *De opificio hominis* is boldly set out by Gregory as a comprehensive speculation on the human being (εἰς τὸν ἄνθρωπον θεωρία).¹² After honouring his brother's memory and his intellectual and moral legacy, Gregory appeals to his readers' benevolence regarding the huge challenge he will have to deal with.

The scope of our proposed enquiry is not small: it is second to none of the wonders of the world, perhaps even greater (μεῖζων) than any of those known to us, because no other existing thing, save the human creation, has been made like to God.¹³

In his second homily on the *Song of songs* Gregory rephrases the same idea: "None of the things that exist is so great (οὕτω μέγα) as to be compared to your greatness".¹⁴ According to him, this magnificence does not only apply to the virtuous man or the saint, but to the whole of human nature, including the excellence of the human body. The book of *Proverbs* had called the merciful man "great and precious" (μέγα καὶ τίμιον).¹⁵ Gregory transforms this personal moral accomplishment into a universal and objective value belonging to humanity as such. Thus he speaks of "this great and precious reality, human being" (μέγα τοῦτο καὶ τίμιον χρῆμα, ὁ ἄνθρωπος).¹⁶ He also turns to these terms as universal human attributes in *De virginitate* and *In Inscriptiones Psalmorum*.¹⁷

In the homily, Nyssen directly questions the human being: "How, then, shall you marvel at the heavens, O human, when you see that you yourself are more lasting than the heavens?"¹⁸ Let us remember that in *De opificio hominis* Gregory had not hesitated to place humanity beyond the heavens and the stars.

11 This does not prevent Gregory in other homiletic treatises from harshly describing the misery of the human condition as a consequence of sin.

12 Cf. *Op hom* Praef. 2 (ed. Forbes 104 [PG 44 125]).

13 *Op hom* Praef. 3 (ed. Forbes 104 [PG 44 125]; tr. NPNF2 v 716): "Ἔστι δὲ οὐ μικρὸς ὁ προκειμένου ἡμῖν εἰς θεωρίαν σκοπὸς, οὐδὲ τις τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ θαυμάτων τὰ δευτέρα φερόμενος, τάχα δὲ καὶ μεῖζων ἑκάστου τῶν γινωσκομένων, διότι οὐδὲν ἕτερον Θεῷ ἐκ τῶν ὄντων ὁμοίωται, πλὴν τῆς κατὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον κτίσεως".

14 *Cant* II (GNO VI 68,10–11; tr. Norris 75): "οὐδὲν οὕτω τῶν ὄντων μέγα, ὥς τῷ σῶ μεγέθει παραμετρεῖσθαι".

15 Pt 20.6.

16 Cf. *Op hom* II 1 (ed. Forbes 120 [PG 44 132]).

17 Cf. *Virg* XII,3 (GNO VIII/1 299,23–25); *Inscr* II 16 (GNO V 173,18–21).

18 *Cant* II (GNO VI 68,19–69,2; tr. Norris 77): "πῶς γὰρ θαυμάσεις τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, ὦ ἄνθρωπε, σεαυτὸν βλέπων τῶν οὐρανῶν μονιμώτερον".

O marvellous! A sun is made, and no counsel precedes; a heaven likewise; and to these no single thing in creation is equal. So great a wonder is formed by a word alone [...]. So too in all particular cases, the ether, the stars, the intermediate air, the sea, the earth, the animals, the plants, all are brought into being with a word, while only to the making of man does the Maker of all draw near with circumspection ...¹⁹

Conceptual and stylistic consistency between both works is undeniable. It is this exaltation of the human being, its dignity, greatness and freedom, the aspect of Gregory's thought which will influence Western tradition more decisively.

2 The Influence on the Quattrocento

Nyssen's intellectual posterity and textual tradition was certainly not free from difficulties. His persona and his work were outshined by the extraordinary figure of his elder brother Basil. Contrary to Basil and to Origen, there were very few ancient Latin translations of Gregory's texts. He was often criticized for his bold theological theories. Moreover, in the medieval West, he was usually mistaken for his friend and namesake Nazianzen, and from the 12th century onwards, also for Nemesius of Emesa, author of the treatise *De natura hominis*, since its most renowned Latin translator, Burgundio of Pisa, misattributed that work to Nyssen. These are some of the reasons why the name of Gregory of Nyssa was scarcely or inaccurately mentioned as an *auctoritas* in the Latin Middle Ages.

Nevertheless, the influence of Gregory's anthropological theory is strong and lasting throughout the medieval period. Indeed, *De opificio hominis* enjoys the rare privilege of an early translation into Latin by two very reputed scholars: Dionysius Exiguus, the learned monk and canonist from the mid-6th century, who worked with Cassiodorus; and none other than Eriugena in the second half of the 9th century, who also quotes him extensively in his *Periphyseon*.²⁰

19 *Op hom* III 2 (ed. Forbes 124 [PG 44 133]; tr. NPNF2 V 723): “Ὁ τοῦ θαύματος ἥλιος κατασκευάζεται, καὶ οὐδεμία προηγείται βουλή· οὐρανὸς ὡσαύτως, ὃν οὐδέν τι τῶν κατὰ τὴν κτίσιν ἰσὸν ἔστι, ῥήματι μόνῳ τὸ τοιοῦτον θαῦμα συνίσταται [...]· οὕτω καὶ τὰ καθ’ ἑκάστον πάντα, αἰθέρ, ἀστέρες, ὁ διὰ μέσου ἀήρ, θάλαττα, γῆ, ζῶα, φυτὰ, πάντα λόγῳ πρὸς γένεσιν ἄγεται· μόνῃ δὲ τῇ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατασκευῇ περιεσκεμμένως πρόσεισιν ὁ τοῦ παντὸς ποιητής”.

20 See the critical edition of Dionysius' version in G.H. Forbes, *Sancti Patris nostri Gregorii Nysseni Basilii Magni fratris quae supersunt omnia*, Burntisland 1855–1861, Tome 1/1, 97–

Both versions have arrived directly or indirectly to Italian humanists and philosophers in the 15th century. Let us keep in mind that in their eyes the conception of the human being as an image of God developed by early Christian authors had transformed and enriched the classical theory of the *dignitas hominis*.²¹

Years before the arrival of the Byzantine scholar Manuel Chrysoloras to Florence in 1397, the interest for Pagan and Christian Greek authors of Late Antiquity had been promoted mainly by the figure of the Augustinian monk Luigi Marsili, who would invite the entire circle of Florentine humanists to his cell at Santo Spirito to read classical and early Christian texts. Among the volumes obtained by Marsili and read by this generation of humanists there was a manuscript containing the ancient translations of Basil's *In Hexaëmeron* and Gregory's *De opificio hominis*. According to the inventory of the *libraria maior* at Santo Spirito, dating from the Quattrocento, amid the 368 manuscripts listed, this codex is indeed one of the five that have been explicitly described as property of master Luigi Marsili.²² Regretfully, most of the library was dispersed and lost, even Basil and Gregory's manuscript.²³

In the 15th century, Ambrogio Traversari, Florentine abbot of the Camaldolese monks, benefited from a refined classical education and a thorough knowledge of the Greek language, inherited from the previous generation of humanists. Inspired by Marsili, he also gathered around him many of the Florentine humanists in the early Quattrocento. He played a critical role as an advisor and Greek translator during the councils of Basel and Ferrara-Florence.

Between the years 1423 and 1424, Traversari read enthusiastically a Greek manuscript belonging to Niccolò Niccoli, that included Nyssen's *In Canticum Canticorum*: MS *Laur. Plut.* 7.30, currently at the Biblioteca Laurenziana. In December 1423 he wrote to Niccoli about Gregory's homilies. He pointed out, among other things, that the author followed Origen's exegetical type. Then he added: "I dare to say that it is a greater work than Augustine's *Super Genesi ad*

159; Tome 1/2, 161–319. Eriugena's translation was edited by M. Cappuyns, "Le 'De imagine' de Grégoire de Nyse traduit par Jean Scot Érigène", *RThAM* 32 (1965) 205–262. Cf. Ph. Levine, "Two Early Latin Versions of St. Gregory of Nyssa's *περί κατασκευῆς ἀνθρώπου*", *HSCP* 63 (1958) 473–492.

21 See e.g. E. Garin, "La 'Dignitas Hominis' e la letteratura patristica", *Rin.* 1 (1938) 102–146.

22 Cf. D. Gutiérrez, "La biblioteca di S. Spirito in Firenze nella prima metà del secolo XV", *AAug* 25 (1962) 47: "Liber quartus decimus Lodovici Martilii, exameron beati Basilii, item Gregorius de ymagine in hominis conditione, copertus corio albo, completus". See also Ch.L. Stinger, *Humanism and the Church Fathers: Ambrogio Traversari (1386–1439) and the Revival of Patristic Theology in the Early Italian Renaissance*, Albany 1977, 6–8.

23 Cf. *ibidem*.

literam. His style is that of a learned and highly acute man".²⁴ These praises of Nyssen's instruction and eloquence continue in another letter to Niccoli, a month later.

I am diligently reading those fifteen homilies on the *Song of songs* by Nyssen Gregory, and I certainly do not take back my judgement and my opinion. For he proceeds magnificently indeed, both with a grandiose fluency and his majestic meanings.²⁵

It is noteworthy that Traversari associated the *In Canticum* with the Augustinian *De Genesi*, because the latter also dealt with the special dignity of the human being made in the image of God, one of the main aspects the humanists were willing to underscore in ancient Christian authors.²⁶ When Traversari translates Eneas of Gaza's *Theophrastus*—which takes numerous elements directly from Nyssen's anthropology, as proven by Sikorski's classical study, the erudite monk dedicates part of his prologue to exalt this conception of the human being, the soul and the free will, as surpassing the ancient Greek and Latin theories.²⁷ Nyssen's influence on the treatise *De dignitate et excellentia hominis* by Giannozzo Manetti, Traversari's disciple, is also significant.²⁸

From the mid-15th century, thanks to the continuous arrival of Byzantine scholars and Greek manuscripts to the peninsula, four new translations of Gregory's texts were performed. First, George of Trebizond wrote a Latin version of *De vita Moysis* and dedicated it to the powerful cardinal Ludovico Trevisan, who was very close to Pope Eugenius IV.²⁹ The translation became influential among

24 Ambrogio Traversari, *Epistulae* VIII 5 (Mehus 360): "Audeo dicere, maius opus est, quam Augustini super Genesim ad literam. Stilus ipse eruditi, et acutissimi viri". Cf. Ch.L. Stinger, *Humanism and the Church Fathers*, Albany 1977, 114.141.151–152.

25 *Ibidem* VIII 3 (Mehus 356): "Nysseni Gregorii xv, illas Homilias in Cantica Canticorum lego diligenter; neque sane me poenitet iudicii, ac sententiae meae. Nam profecto procedit magnifice, magnaue cum facundia, tum sensuum maiestate".

26 Cf. e.g. Augustine of Hippo, *De Genesi ad litteram* III 19–24.

27 See S. Sikorski, *De Aenea Gazaeo* (Breslauer Philologische Abhandlungen IX/5), Breslau 1909, 34–41; J.F. Boissonade, *Aeneas Gazaeus et Zacharias Mitylenaeus de immortalitate animae et consummatione mundi*, Paris 1836, 467–468. The latin translation of the *Theophrastus* has an important impact on the following generations. Ficino makes a copy of it in one of his manuscripts, today the *Riccardianus* 709 in Florence.

28 Cf. Ch. Trinkaus, *In our image and likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Renaissance thought*, Chicago 1970, 185–188.239.419.

29 Cf. H. Brown Wicher, "Gregorius Nyssenus" in: F.E. Cranz—P.O. Kristeller (eds.), *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum*, Vol. v, Washington 1984, 182–185.

the humanists in Rome and in the sermons of the papal court.³⁰ Between 1465 and 1473, Pietro Balbi, Nicholas Cusanus and Bessarion's friend and collaborator, translated Nyssen's *De vita Macrinae* and his philosophical dialogue *De anima et resurrectione*. Sadly, none of them have reached us.³¹ Finally, Athanasius Chalkeopoulos, another former protégé at the Roman Academy of Bessarion, rendered into Latin Gregory's *De oratione dominica* around 1472 and dedicated it to Pope Paul II.³²

I have dealt myself elsewhere with the direct and indirect reception of Gregory's works on Nicholas of Cusa, who learns from Nyssen's anthropology mainly through Eriugena and the medieval tradition that followed him.³³ But the most decisive influence of Nyssen's thought on the Quattrocento probably occurs in the so-called Platonic Academy in Florence. Although Marsilio Ficino is also familiar with Gregory's anthropology through primary and secondary sources, the most interesting author regarding the topic of the greatness in the human being is Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.

The young Pico mentioned twice Nyssen's name in his works and he owned several of his manuscripts, including Greek and Latin volumes of *De opificio hominis* and other texts in Greek.³⁴ Besides, I have recently found two manuscripts with Latin translations of Gregory's works which had been annotated on the margins by Giovanni Pico, surely during one of his sojourns in the abbey of Fiesole.³⁵ The young Count's *marginalia* are mostly reading marks.

30 Two autograph manuscripts are kept in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana and one early copy in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana: *Vat. lat.* 255; *Vat. lat.* 4534; Firenze, *Laur. Faesul.* 45, ff. 242^v–267^v.

31 Cf. H. Brown Wicher, "Gregorius Nyssenus" in: F.E. Cranz—P.O. Kristeller (eds.), *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum*, Vol. v, 65–66.

32 Cf. I.D. Backus (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: from the Carolingians to the Maurists*, Vol. II, Leiden 1997, 494.

33 See F. Bastitta Harriet, "La antropología del *De opificio hominis* de Gregorio de Nisa en la obra de Nicolás de Cusa", in: C. D'Amico—J.M. Machetta (eds.), *La cuestión del hombre en Nicolás de Cusa: fuentes, originalidad y diálogo con la modernidad*, Buenos Aires 2015, 43–55.

34 Cf. Giovanni Pico, *Apologia* (Opera [1572] 127); Id. *Disputationes adversus Astrologiam* IV 4 (Garin 452–454). Concerning the manuscripts in his library, see P. Kibre, *The Library of Pico della Mirandola*, New York 1936, 34–36; 173; 208; 258; F. Calori Cesis, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, detto la Fenice degli ingegni. Cenni biografici con documenti ed appendice", *Memorie storiche della città e dell'antico Ducato della Mirandola* 11 (1897) 37; 59; 62; A. Diller—H.D. Saffrey—L.G. Westerink, *Bibliotheca graeca manuscripta cardinalis Dominici Grimani (1461–1523)*, Venezia 2003, 129; 134.

35 They are the MSS *Laur. Faesul.* 44 and 45, today at the Biblioteca Laurenziana, which include the *De opificio hominis* in Dionysius Exiguus' version and the *De vita Moysis* translated by George of Trebizond, respectively.

Furthermore, Angelo Poliziano quotes in one of his notebooks a large Greek fragment from the prologue belonging to *In Canticum Canticorum*.³⁶ The passage is a sublime defence of the allegorical method, and we can be pretty sure that Giovanni Pico, his close associate in those years, indicated the reference to him and supplied him the codex from which it should be copied.³⁷

Pico's celebrated theory of human preeminence and dignity, as expressed in the *Oratio* and in the *Heptaplus*, shows evident traces of Gregory's anthropology, which I cannot fully set forth here.³⁸ I will just mention some examples related to *In Canticum Canticorum* and to *De opificio hominis*. In the proem to book IV of the *Heptaplus*, Pico associates the Delphic oracle with the versicle of the *Song* 1,8, in a passage with some echoes of Plotinus and Origen, as much as of Gregory.

Let us turn therefore to ourselves and see, as the Prophet says, how many good things (*videamus quanta bona*) God has made for our souls, so that, in consequence of giving little heed to understanding ourselves, we may not hear the Father saying in the Canticles, "If you know not yourself, O fairest among women, go forth and follow after the steps of the flocks".³⁹

36 Cf. *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 4,10–12,19), quoted in Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, *Mon. lat.* 748, ff. 92^r–93^r. See also C. Di Pierro, "Zibaldoni autografi di Angelo Poliziano inediti e sconosciuti, nella R. Biblioteca di Monaco", *GSLI* 55 (1910) 4.

37 Pico was Poliziano's maximum authority in philosophical, theological and patristic matters, as pointed out by A. Grafton in "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: Trials and Triumphs of an Omnivore", in: Id., *Commerce with the classics: Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers*, Ann Arbor 1997, 128–129: "Poliziano knew exactly what to do when a problem baffled him, he consulted a higher authority. He took his unnamed friend to see Pico, and they asked him ...". In addition, Poliziano intriguingly corrects in his notebook the name of Gregory, whom he had confused with his namesake, Nazianzen (cf. *Mon. lat.* 748, f. 92^r). This was probably made at his friend's urging. Indeed, Nyssen's identity was well discerned by the Count of Mirandola, who also emends an analogous misattribution in the table of contents of *Laur. Faesul.* 44 (f. 1^v) and writes in his typical *minuscola* over the reference to *De opificio hominis*: "Nysseni".

38 The reception of Gregory on Pico will be minutely treated in my forthcoming paper: "Indefinite Nature and Creative Freedom: Gregory of Nyssa as a Source for Giovanni Pico" (in preparation).

39 Giovanni Pico, *Heptaplus* IV Proem. (Garin 268; tr. Carmichael 117): "Redeamus igitur in nos et videamus (ut ait Propheta) quanta bona fecit Deus animae nostrae; ne, si forsitan in semet agnoscenda minus diligens fuerit, audiat Patrem dicentem in *Canticis*: 'Si te ignoras, o pulcherrima mulierum, egredere et abi post vestigia gregum tuorum'". Translations of Pico's works are taken from Ch.G. Wallis—P.J.W. Miller—D. Carmichael, *Pico della Mirandola: On the Dignity of Man, Heptaplus, On Being and the One*, Indianapolis 1965, with minor changes.

Notice the coincidence between Pico and Gregory in their interpretation of the Beloved's phrase and the Delphic oracle in a quantitative way: Pico's "*videamus quanta*" may well echo Gregory's "γνῶθι πόσον". Indeed Pico insists, as Nyssen does, that human beings must know and preserve the immensity of their own dignity, which does not lie in their spirituality, cut off from matter, but in their entire nature.⁴⁰ As Pico states shortly after in the *Heptaplus*:

Therefore, I pray, let us listen to the holy theologians reminding us of our dignity and of the divine goods freely promised us by the most generous Father.⁴¹

In this second text, at least two aspects probably refer to Nyssen: the allusion to the Christian theologians and his typical exhortation to good works grounded on one's own dignity and on the greatness of the divine gift. We also find the quality of *liberalissimus* predicated of God, an attribute repeatedly used by Gregory in *De opificio hominis*, in *De beautitudinibus* and in *In Canticum*.

Another possible connection between Pico and Nyssen concerning these matters is the treatise *De natura corporis et animae* by William of St. Thierry. This text begins with the same parallel between the oracle of Delphi and the *Song's* versicle, and then engages in a thorough exposition of Nyssen's anthropology, by quoting word for word a large part of Eriugena's translation of *De opificio hominis*.⁴²

But only in the *Oratio* does the direct link with Gregory become almost compelling. Dionysius's translation of that exaltation of human nature by Nyssen, described as a great and precious reality: "*magna haec et preciosa res*", seems to resonate in Pico's anthropological awe: "*res supra fidem et mira*".⁴³ The high destiny of the human creature is also envied in the *Oratio* by the stars and by otherworldly intellects.⁴⁴ What is more, the special care of one's own dignity is more clearly related in this work, as in Gregory's, to the free decision and to the capacity for divinization.

40 Cf. *ibidem* IV Proem. (Garin 266–270).

41 *Ibidem* VII Proem. (Garin 332; tr. Carmichael 150): "Audiamus igitur sacros theologos dignitatis nostrae nos admonentes et quae ultro nobis a Patre liberalissimo divina bona praestantur".

42 Cf. William of Saint-Thierry, *De natura corporis et animae* (MPL 180, 695–726). Cf. J. Décha-net, *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry: aux sources d'une pensée*, Paris 1978.

43 Cf. *Op hom* II 1 (PG 44 132; ed. Forbes 121); Giovanni Pico, *Oratio* (Garin 102).

44 Cf. Giovanni Pico, *Oratio* (Garin 102).

But why all this? In order for us to understand that, after having been born in this state so that we may be what we will to be, we ought to take particular care that no one may say against us that, being held in honour, we do not know that we are made similar to brutes and mindless beasts of burden [...], to avoid making our free choice, which he gave to us, harmful to ourselves instead of helpful toward salvation, by abusing the very indulgent liberality of the Father.⁴⁵

In these and in other texts, thematic and terminological concordance with Nyssen's words is quite remarkable. Particularly, the formula "*ut id simus quod esse volumus*", repeated in various parts of the *Oratio* in reference to the virtuality and to the ontological scope of free decision, recalls Nyssen's bold statement: "πρὸς ὅπερ ἂν ἐθέλωμεν ἐν τούτῳ γινόμενοι", pronounced again and again in many of his works.⁴⁶



Although our inquiry is far from being exhausted in these few pages, it has allowed us to verify the particular way in which the sensibility of the humanists in the Quattrocento rediscovered and cherished Gregory of Nyssa's anthropological synthesis, especially during the "philosophical turn" which characterized the Florentine Academy in the second half of the century. After all, it was exactly the convergence they were searching for: to ponder once more the greatness of the human being and to express its mystery, not with the technical and abstruse formulas from previous centuries, but by uniting speculation with eloquence, and philosophical and theological rigour with poetry.

45 *Ibidem* (Garin 108–110; tr. Wallis 7, with changes): "Sed quorsum haec? ut intelligamus, postquam hac nati sumus conditione, ut id simus quod esse volumus, curare hoc potissimum debere nos, ut illud quidem in nos non dicatur, cum in honore essemus non cognovisse similes factos brutis et iumentis insipientibus [...], ne, abutentes indulgentissima Patris liberalitate, quam dedit ille liberam optionem, e salutari noxiam faciamus nobis".

46 Cf. e.g. *Vit Moys* II, 80 (GNO VII/1 56,24–27); *Cant* IV (GNO VI 103,15–16); *An et res* (GNO III/3 90–91); *Op hom* XVI 11 (ed Forbes 202 [PG 44 180]). Regarding the possible origin of this ontological scope of human freedom in Gregory see F. Bastitta Harriet, "Ser lo que quieras: la libertad ontológica en Plotino y Gregorio de Nisa", *Teología y Vida* 58/4 (2017) 473–487.

Bibliography

- Backus, I.D. (ed.). *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: from the Carolingians to the Maurists*, Vol. II, Leiden 1997.
- Bastitta Harriet, F. "Radix dilectionis: asimilación y transposición de la ética clásica en Gregorio de Nisa y Agustín de Hipona", in: S. Filippi (ed.), *Controversias filosóficas, científicas y teológicas en el pensamiento Tardo-Antiguo y Medieval*, Rosario 2011, 81–91;
- Bastitta Harriet, F. "La antropología del *De opificio hominis* de Gregorio de Nisa en la obra de Nicolás de Cusa", in: C. D'Amico—J.M. Machetta (eds.), *La cuestión del hombre en Nicolás de Cusa: fuentes, originalidad y diálogo con la modernidad*, Buenos Aires 2015, 43–55;
- Bastitta Harriet, F. "Ser lo que quieras: la libertad ontológica en Plotino y Gregorio de Nisa", *Teología y Vida* 58/4 (2017) 473–487.
- Boissonade, J.F. *Aeneas Gazaeus et Zacharias Mitylenaeus de immortalitate animae et consummatione mundi*, Paris 1836.
- Brown Wicher, H. "Gregorius Nyssenus" in: F.E. Cranz—P.O. Kristeller (eds.), *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum*, Vol. v, Washington 1984, 182–185.
- Buber, M. "What is man?", in: R.G. Smith (ed.), *Martin Buber. Between Man and Man*, New York 2002, 140–244.
- Cahill, J.B. "The date and setting of Gregory of Nyssa's commentary on the Song of Songs", *JThS* 32 (1981) 447–460.
- Calori Cesis, F. "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, detto la Fenice degli ingegni. Cenni biografici con documenti ed appendice", *Memorie storiche della città e dell'antico Ducato della Mirandola* 11 (1897) 37–62.
- Cappuyns, M. "Le 'De imagine' de Grégoire de Nysse traduit par Jean Scot Érigène", *RThAM* 32 (1965) 205–262.
- Courcelle, P. *"Connais-toi toi-même", de Socrate à Saint Bernard*, Vol. I, Paris 1974.
- Daniélou, J. "La chronologie des œuvres de Grégoire de Nysse", *StPat* 7 (1966) 159–169.
- Déchanet, J. *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry: aux sources d'une pensée*, Paris 1978.
- Diller, A.—H.D. Saffrey—L.G. Westerink, *Bibliotheca graeca manuscripta cardinalis Dominici Grimani (1461–1523)*, Venezia 2003.
- Di Pierro, C. "Zibaldoni autografi di Angelo Poliziano inediti e sconosciuti, nella R. Biblioteca di Monaco", *GSLL* 55 (1910) 1–32.
- Dünzl, F. *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993;
- Dünzl, F. "Die Canticum-Exegese des Gregor von Nyssa und Origenes im Vergleich", *JAC* 36 (1993) 94–109.
- Garin, E. "La 'Dignitas Hominis' e la letteratura patristica", *Rin.* 1 (1938) 102–146.
- Grafton, A. "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: Trials and Triumphs of an Omnivore", in:

- Id., *Commerce with the classics: Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers*, Ann Arbor 1997, 93–134.
- Gutiérrez, D. “La biblioteca di S. Spirito in Firenze nella prima metà del secolo xv”, *AAug* 25 (1962) 5–84.
- Kibre, P. *The Library of Pico della Mirandola*, New York 1936.
- Ladner, G.B. “The Philosophical Anthropology of Saint Gregory of Nyssa”, *DOP* 12 (1958) 59–94.
- Levine, Ph. “Two Early Latin Versions of St. Gregory of Nyssa’s *περὶ κατασκευῆς ἀνθρώπου*”, *HSCP* 63 (1958) 473–492.
- Mosshammer, A.A. “Gregory of Nyssa and Christian Hellenism”, *StPat* 32 (1997) 170–195.
- Norris Jr., R.A. *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012.
- Sikorski, S. *De Aenea Gazaeo* (Breslauer Philologische Abhandlungen 1X/5), Breslau 1909.
- Stinger, Ch.L. *Humanism and the Church Fathers: Ambrogio Traversari (1386–1439) and the Revival of Patristic Theology in the Early Italian Renaissance*, Albany 1977.
- Trinkaus, Ch. *In our image and likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Renaissance thought*, Chicago 1970.
- Wallis, Ch.G.—P.J.W. Miller—D. Carmichael, *Pico della Mirandola: On the Dignity of Man, Heptaplus, On Being and the One*, Indianapolis 1965.

“The Royal Bed”: Gregory of Nyssa’s Platonic Reading of the *Song of Songs*

Constantine Bozinis

Despite its intense Christian overtones and its successive references to the Incarnate Word of God or to the Church, Gregory’s interpretation of the *Song of Songs* is based firmly in philosophy. The motive of divine *erōs*, upon which it centers, gradually unravelling its various aspects, traces its heritage back to ancient Hellenism. In fact, it is presented for the first time in the Platonic dialogue *Symposium*.¹ Many of the ideas that Plato elaborates therein through the mouth of Socrates are echoed in the allegorical interpretation of the verses of the *Song of Songs*, which Gregory offers us in his commentary. First among these is, of course, the idea that whatever is beautiful here on earth is simply a fleeting reflection of the transcendent beauty, which radiates eternally from its heavenly dwelling place. “Beauty, which is so honored in this world, exists only in the imagination of men who think that it does exist. But you are truly beautiful, and not just beautiful but the essence of beauty itself. You are forever beautiful, to the ages of ages you remain that which you are. Nor do you bloom, when the time comes, so that your blossom may then be lost when the time has past, but the dew of your youth remains forever in your endless life”.² In this erotic confession of the soul to the Heavenly Bridegroom, from the fourth homily *On the Song of Songs*, the metaphysical depth which the concept of beauty acquires for Gregory is precisely outlined, as it is connected to the self-existence of the divine, under the influence of Platonism. In contrast with the ephemeral nature of every kind of beauty that man encounters on earth, the beauty of God is, in Gregory’s opinion, eternal and everlasting. “It is neither born nor lost, it neither grows nor decays”, as Socrates mentions in the *Symposium*, revealing to the half-drunken company of his friends the archetypal Form of the Beauty.³ Just like the wise old man from the Platonic dialogue, Gregory upholds that the superiority of the beauty of God in relation to whatever on earth may give the impression of being beautiful is due to its simplicity, in addition to its immortality. It is not joined either with flesh or blood, neither does it

1 See A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, Oxford 1981, 9–14.

2 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 106,18–107,4).

3 *Symposium* 211a.

please the eyes with its shape, its color, its size and its symmetrical uniformity. It is absolutely immaterial and pure—yet another characteristic that we see Gregory attributing together with Socrates to divine beauty, in order to emphasize the distance that separates it from its various imitations within the earthly sphere.⁴ Moreover, the echo of Socrates' reasoning from the *Symposion* reaches our ears with clarity in Gregory's disclosures to his audience of the reason that leads the soul to a state of passionate *erōs* with the Bridegroom of the Church. In accordance with Gregory, he is the fount from which springs the grace and beauty of each creation within the universe (ἡ τοῦ κάλλους πηγὴ).⁵ This characteristically Platonic view, that beings are not beautiful in and of themselves but that they acquire beauty to the measure to which they participate in its ideal Form, which constitutes the ultimate motive of the love passion,⁶ is repeated by Gregory in his homilies on *The Song of Songs*, leaving us with minimal doubts concerning the close relation of his thought to Platonic philosophy.⁷

Nevertheless, beyond the similarities that we discern in the way in which Gregory on the one hand, and Plato on the other, perceive the divine beauty, they agree as well on yet another essential point: man can only come into contact with this beauty after an exhausting struggle, during which he matures spiritually and gradually ascends from the sensual to the intelligible world. Socrates describes these gradual stages of ascent towards the divine beauty in extensive detail in the *Symposion*, presenting them as an esoteric knowledge that the prophetess Diotima offered him, in a private conversation. At the first stage a person is attracted by the physical beauty of the body. At the second, he uncovers the beauty of ethical actions and institutions that constitute and maintain the community. Then, at the third stage, he is enchanted

4 Cf. *Symposion* 211a–e and *Cant* V (GNO VI 157,14–159,11); VI (172,22–174,20); XI (338,17–18); XII (357,6–20; 368,7–14); XV (439,4–20). See also *Virg* X (GNO VIII/1 290,14–291,4).

5 See *Cant* XI (334,3–321,7–22); VIII (255,12–17) and *Virg* XI (GNO VIII/1 292,10–15); *Vit Moys* II (GNO VII/1 114,9–14).

6 See *Symposion* 211b–c with the explanations of L. Robin, *Platon: Œuvres complètes*, Vol. IV/2 (*Le Banquet*), Paris 1929, xciv: “Tout au contraire les choses belles [...] ne possèdent ce qu'elles ont d'existence, que par leur participation à cette essence absolument existante”.

7 A similar discovery is made by W. Jaeger, who demonstrates, by an entire series of testimonies, Gregory's dependence upon the *Symposion*, and Platonic thought in general (*Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius*, Leiden 1954, n. 2 p. 76). Of course, regarding the utilization of the Platonic ideas in interpreting the *Song*, Gregory owes much to Origen. The latter's commentary on the *Song of Songs* offers to our Cappadocian a firm basis upon which to show his philosophical temperament in the homilies which he writes concerning the love poem of the Old Testament. See R.A. Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Writings of the Greco-Roman World 13, Atlanta 2012, XXXV–XXXVIII.

by the sciences and is thrown into the sea of diverse knowledge which they offer him, in order to be made worthy in the end of seeing the ideal archetype from which every kind of beauty thusfar tasted springs.⁸ The intellectual eyes of his soul suddenly open and this mysterious beauty shines upon them, which exists from itself in an entirely unified form, without any corruption or change. This is the fourth stage, which is also the completion of the ascent as it is described in the *Symposion*, when the soul, purified from every mortal desire, is filled with *erōs* for the divine.⁹ On the other hand, we do not encounter a systematic exposition of the gradual ascent towards divine beauty in Gregory's commentary on the *Song of Songs*, which makes a comparison between Gregory and Plato's views on this matter rather difficult. We are thus forced to attempt such a comparison with the aid of testimonies offered to us throughout his work as a whole. How many times does Gregory not speak, either in one treatise or another, of the beauty of the virtues that adorn the soul and restore its paradisiacal grace?¹⁰ In addition, despite the weight that Gregory attributes to man's ethical perfection, he does not fail to weave an encomium of the sciences and to underline their beauty. In his *Life of Moses*, specifically, he mentions that Basil, following the example of the ancient Israelites who placed their Egyptian treasures in the Tent of Meeting, adorned the Church with secular wisdom, that is logic, physics, ethics, geometry and astronomy.¹¹ Moreover, it is self-evident that the engagement with these sciences aids the faithful Christian in his attempt to penetrate into the mystery of God through the study of physical phenomena—an especially treasured path towards the knowledge of God for Gregory of Nyssa.¹² Thus, if we remove the first stage of the *Symposion*, in other words the *erōs* of the body as an initial experience of divine beauty, which is of course erased with one stroke of the pen by the Church father, all

8 *Symposion* 209e–210e.

9 *Ibidem* 210e–211e. The *erōs* which the divine beauty of the Idea inspires in man is for Plato much stronger than that of any earthly image of it (211d–e). For this reason also, the ascent towards it constitutes a gradual culmination of the emotions of love and devotion which the human soul contains within it—a *scala amoris*, as A.W. Price correctly notes in *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*, Oxford 1989, 43.

10 See in his commentary *Cant* II (GNO VI 60,1–22); III (78,17–82,16); VI (187,7–188,4); IX (268,16–272,21); XIII (390,1ff.); XV (441,18–442,9,444,14–445,3). Cf. *Eccl* I (GNO V 295,6–16) and III (324,3–326,18); *Virg* XII (GNO VIII/1 299,14–302,4); *Macr* (GNO VIII/1 402,14–403,2); *Pulcher* (GNO IX 465,9–26)—a small selection of passages from the plethora offered to us throughout Gregory's work.

11 *Vit Moys* II, 115 (GNO VII/1 68,8–69,3).

12 See *Cant* XI (GNO VI 334,14–336,1); XIII (385,22–386,9); *Eun* II 222–225 (GNO I 290,3–291,11); *Inscr* I 3 (GNO V 31,17–33,6); *Eccl* I (GNO V 284,12–285,12); *Vit Moys* II (GNO VII/1 38,15–39,5; 40,4–13; 43,21–44,23) etc.

of the remaining stages correspond—at least in general terms—to the general stages of the soul's ascent as Gregory presents them. It is characteristic that in his early ascetic treatise, *On Virginity*, Gregory lists the arts, sciences, traditions and social institutions among the deceitful images of beauty, which one would have to leave behind in order to come to know the true *erōs* for the divine. He later emphasizes the unrivalled beauty of God with a philosophical vocabulary borrowed from the *Symposion*, and highlights that the ultimate goal to which man must devote all his energies is the viewing of this beauty.¹³ The ideal of the Christian life is identified in Gregory neither to a small nor a large degree with the final stage of initiation into *erōs*, as described by Plato, that is the effulgence of the Form of the Beauty before the eyes of the soul, as it is filled with intellectual light.¹⁴

Likewise, in his commentary on the *Song of Songs* the vision of God is found at the center of Gregory's interest. It acts as a fundamental tool in the allegorical method of interpretation of the Holy Scriptures that he employs. The soul's deeper desire to see the beauty of God is hidden, in Gregory's opinion, behind a series of poetic images contained in the bucolic song of the Old Testament: the impatience that overtakes the Bride to see the face of her beloved; her reverie of him, as she remains awake in her bed at night; or her wandering throughout the streets, the squares and the marketplace in hopes of meeting him; even the oaths that she gives to their love and her heart-wrenching cries for him to come and meet her.¹⁵ Paradoxically, though, this desire is never fully satisfied. The Bridegroom constantly escapes from her gaze and is lost in the darkness like a vision in the night. Taking as a model the theophany that Moses experiences on Mount Sinai as he is encompassed by the divine darkness, Gregory presents the revelation of God as taking place here as well in darkness. The soul perceives his presence, but is unable to discern his physical characteristics.¹⁶ Gregory indicatively ignores entire strophes of the *Song* in which is narrated the union

13 *Virg* XI (GNO VIII/1 296,1–20). Cf. *Vit Moys* II (GNO VII/1 40,20–25).

14 For the successive stages of the soul's ascent, see also *Inscr* I 1 (GNO V 26,19–29).

15 *Cant* V (GNO VI 163,11–164,15); VI (178,16–183,15); XI (320,8–322,3); XII (GNO VI 353,11–357,2; 360,14–361,6; 366,10–368,3); XIII (376,3–377,20; 383,6–14).

16 See XI (322,6–324,12); also XII (353,11–357,2) and *Vit Moys* II (GNO VII/1 86,11–87,13; 110,5–115,14). The revelation of God in darkness constitutes Gregory's most fundamental departure from the thought of Origen. Even though he follows in the footsteps of the Alexandrian, interpreting the *Song* as an allegory for the desire which God awakens in the human soul, he changes completely the terms by which the ascent to him is realized: "Whereas for Origen the soul pursues a path of increasing light [...] with Gregory the soul travels deeper and deeper into darkness" (Louth, *The Origins*, 83). The divine darkness which covers God in Mount Sinai hides also the face of the heavenly Bridegroom from the gaze of

of Bride and Bridegroom in the light of day. Even the Bride's descriptions of her beloved's eyes, lips, hair and build are interpreted by our Cappadocian father within a strict ecclesiological framework: they do not concern the soul's mystical experience during its ascension towards God, but the revealing of his grace to humanity with the Incarnation and establishment of the Church.¹⁷ Undoubtedly, Gregory's traumatic experiences of the dogmatic controversies of the end of the 4th century have made him more reserved towards the power of logic to approach the mystery of the divine. An immediate vision of his beauty, on the model of the *Symposion*, would equate to knowledge of his essence, thus justifying the heresy of Eunomius. Furthermore, the distinction "created-uncreated" that is introduced into Christian theology within the turmoil of the Arian controversy creates a chasm on the ontological level between man and God, which even the intellect (*nous*) in its most passionless state is unable to bridge.¹⁸ In the twelfth homily *On the Song of Songs* we see the soul realizing in sadness that "it has fallen in love with the unattainable and desires him whom it cannot know". The soul's vain search for her beloved has wearied her.¹⁹ However, in the next moment angels take away the shroud covering her face, and she is immediately encouraged. She "sees" before her a heavenly beauty greater than what she had ever imagined, and realizes that the pursuit of her beloved is not a futile effort. Regardless of whether or not she sees him face to face as she would like, his beauty is outlined more clearly and his joy is offered more intensely the closer she approaches to him. The arrow of *erōs* penetrates her, down to the depths of her being, and she cries out, "I have been wounded by love!".²⁰ Thus, the mystical experience of expansion (ἐπέκτασις) that Gregory described above signifies, as is supported in research, his emancipation from Platonic philosophy.²¹ Nevertheless, the umbilical cord that connects him to Platonic philosophy does not

his beloved. For the repetition of many motifs from *Life of Moses* in Gregory's interpretation of the *Song of Songs*: F. Dünzl, "Gregory von Nyssa's *Homilien zum Canticum* auf dem Hintergrund seiner *Vita Moysis*", *VigChr* 44 (1999) 371–381.

17 See e.g. *Cant* XIII (383,15–399,3) and XIV *passim*.

18 Interesting observations on this in A.A. Mosshammer, "Gregory's Intellectual Development: A Comparison of the Homilies on the Beatitudes with the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*", in: H.R. Drobner—A. Viciano (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes, Proceedings of the 8th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2000, 360–367, 386–387, where further bibliography for Gregory's maturation as a theologian and interpreter of Scripture through the experience of the Arian conflict.

19 *Cant* XII (GNO VI 369,14–21).

20 *Ibidem* (369,22–370,11).

21 See J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique: La doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1944, 141–142, 159–161, 175–176, 291–307; more recently Louth, *The Origins*, 97 and Th. Böhm, *Theoria—Unendlichkeit—Aufstieg: Philosophische Implikationen zu De*

break. Gregory develops in an innovative way a motif interwoven with it, the *erōs* that awakens the soul to the divine beauty. Even at an advanced age, when he takes up the interpretation of the *Song of Songs*, he derives his inspiration from the *Symposion*, as well as from other Platonic dialogues, as we will soon discover as we examine his commentary below.

At verse 6.5 of the *Song of Songs* we encounter the Bridegroom complimenting the Bride for the seduction of her gaze. “Turn away your eyes from me, for my heart flutters”, he tells her in an intensely passionate tone.²² Gregory explains the compliment in the fifteenth homily of his commentary. Interpreting the Septuagint text in a clearly arbitrary manner, he transfers the compliment from the Bridegroom to the Bride. And if we keep in mind that the romance between the two young lovers that is narrated in the *Song of Songs* constitutes, in Gregory’s opinion, a symbolic representation of the soul’s *erōs* for the divine, his interpretation is entirely justified. How is possible for God to feel an upheaval within himself when man’s soul turns towards him? It is then the human soul that dissolves in longing and flutters, as the divine gaze rests upon it.²³ Later, in order to verify the correctness of his interpretation, Gregory presents a short summary of the history of the divine Economy. He mentions specifically that man was created according to the image and likeness of God with a winged nature; that after the ancestral sin he lost his wings due to his turn towards evil; that, finally, he recovers them through the denial of the world, through justice and holiness that the incarnate God the Logos solidifies within him.²⁴ One by one Gregory’s explanations, concerning the fall and restoration of human nature, clearly reveal the Platonic background to his theological thought. Needless to say, the image of the soul’s wings comes from the Platonic dialogue *Phaidros*, a portion of which is devoted to the issue of divine *erōs*.²⁵ In accordance with the myth that Socrates tells in the famous “Palinode”, the soul, in its initial state before being incarcerated in the body, had wings. It

Vita Moysis von Gregor von Nyssa, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 35, Leiden 1996, 84, 94–95, 105–106, 267–268.

22 All passages from Holy Scripture are taken from the Revised Standard Version, although occasionally modified for the sake of style.

23 See *Cant* xv (GNO VI 446,14–447,2), where Gregory verbatim states: “To some interpreters it appears that the words are spoken by the Lord to the purified soul, but I suspect they are more properly assigned to the Bride. For she is the one to whom I find the sense of what the text says appropriate” (tr. Norris 473–475).

24 *Ibidem* (447,13–448,16).

25 As is known, the *Symposion* does not constitute Plato’s final word on *erōs*. There are several questions left open concerning its nature and function—see for details the study of Price, *Love and Friendship*, 55–58—that are taken up again in *Phaidros*, where they are treated

flew with ease even up to the "apse of heaven", enjoying together with the gods the divine vision of the Forms in the kingdom of the truly existent (ὄντως ὄν).²⁶ At some point, however, it fell into lethargy and was overcome by evil. Human nature became heavy and lost its wings, thus plummeting down to the earthly realm. There it was enslaved to its baser instincts and the desires of the flesh.²⁷ The only power, as Socrates mentions later on, that can free the soul from the animalistic state in which it has ended up—apart from occupying itself with philosophical investigation—is *erōs*. The well-formed body and subtle characteristics of a face that radiates with youth and beauty recall into the memory of the soul the divine beauty and fill it with longing to taste this beauty in its purest intellectual form. In this way the soul's wings spring forth again, and breaking the chains that hold it bound to the earth, it is exalted to the heavens.²⁸

Gregory has the *Phaidros* above all else in his mind, diving deeper into the meaning of the Bride's words to her beloved—or vice versa, of course, in accordance with the Septuagint text—"Turn away your eyes from me, for my heart flutters". The proximity of his interpretation to Socrates' reasoning in the Platonic dialogue, concerning the beneficial effects of *erōs* in human life, is abundantly clear. First, the wings as a symbol of the soul's perfection in its initial existence; later, the loss of the wings due to evil; finally, their re-appearance with the longing that the soul feels at the radiance of the divine beauty in created nature.²⁹ Even at this final point Gregory does not differ from Plato. With the utmost skill he joins the opinions that Plato expresses through the mouth of Socrates in the *Phaidros* concerning *erōs* with the most fundamental of Christian dogmas, the incarnation of God the Logos. The quote that he selects from the *Epistle to Titus* in order to show this connection—Ἐπεφάνη ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ

at length. Because of their significance for the shaping of the concept of divine *erōs*, both dialogues are worthy of our attention in the present article on Gregory's Platonic reading of the *Song of Songs*.

26 That is, the intelligible world that, in accordance with Plato, extends beyond the furthest boundary of the heavenly sphere. See *Phaidros* 246e–248b.

27 *Ibidem*, 246c, 248c–e.

28 *Ibidem*, 249d–251a.

29 Gregory's borrowings from the *Phaidros* mentioned above are noted also by the editor of his homilies *On the Song of Songs*, Hermann Langerbeck—see the volume VI of the GNO (Leiden, 1960), 448. Langerbeck traces many other indirect references by Gregory to the *Phaidros*—specifically to the "Palinode" of Socrates to the god *Erōs* (242a–257b)—as well as to other Platonic dialogues in the notes printed above the *apparatus criticus* of the ancient text. Continuing a tradition inaugurated by the founder of the series, Werner Jaeger, the German philologist offers us with his abundant references to Plato and the philosophical literature of antiquity a kind of brief interpretive commentary on Gregory of Nyssa's text.

(“The grace of God has appeared” / 2.11)³⁰—clearly shows, by the double significance of the word *χάρις* (grace and beauty) what Gregory wants his audience to understand. The divine beauty is essentially revealed on earth with the incarnation of the Logos. It is this Incarnation that arouses the soul and fills it with erotic longing, so that it may once again unfold its wings and be exalted above the pettiness of worldly things towards the heavenly. “As soon as God cast his loving gaze upon us, we immediately flapped our wings, according to our former beauty”, he writes characteristically.³¹ And this is not an isolated testimony. In other places as well throughout his commentary Gregory interweaves the teachings of the *Phaidros* concerning *erōs* and the soul with his own thoughts on the Incarnation or piety in general towards the Lord of the Church. For example, in his twelfth homily our burial and resurrection together with Jesus Christ³² is explained in connection with the Platonic teaching concerning the intellectual (*noerē*) and light nature of the soul, that has the innate characteristic of moving towards the heights, in contradiction with the body.³³ Again, in his fifth homily he emphasizes that the rays of the “sun of justice”, that is rising upon the world, render the soul once more agile through its warmth, as it had hardened like a rock from its clinging to the false gods of idolatry.³⁴ Moreover, in his tenth homily there appears in the text another Platonic view from the *Phaidros*, irremovably bound to the issue of *erōs* as Socrates develops it in the dialogue: the superiority of the “godly madness” over level-headedness. In interpreting the words of the Bridegroom to his guests: “Eat, O friends, drink: drink deeply, O lovers” (5.1) as a disguised reference to the sacrament of holy Com-

30 *Cant* XV (GNO VI 448,13–14).

31 *Ibidem* (449,1–3).

32 Rm 6.1–10.

33 See *Cant* XII (342,9–346,2) and *Phaidros* 246c–e, 248a–b; also *Phaedo* 79a–80b, 81a–d; *Respublica* 611e; *Timaeus* 90a. Gregory combines the Pauline interpretation of baptism as the participation of the faithful in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rm 6.1–11) with the growth of the wings of the soul in his eighth homily on the *Song of Songs* as well (249,11–251,20).

34 Cf. *Cant* V (147,6–148,1) and *Phaidros* 251a–b. Mosshammer, “Gregory’s Intellectual Development”, 371–373, 386, counts the above image among the many indications in the commentary on the *Song of Songs* of Gregory’s emancipation from Platonism, failing to realize its immediate dependence upon the *Phaidros*. Moreover, if in reality as Mosshammer contends, Gregory in his commentary on the *Song of Songs* rejects his earlier views concerning motion, now considering it “the property of created intelligence, instead of inhering only to the sensible matter” (*ibidem*, 373), then rather than distancing himself from Plato, he is actually coming closer to him. See *Phaidros* 245c–246a. Of course, the general argument of Mosshammer’s article is moving in the correct direction and constitutes a valuable contribution to the study of Gregory of Nyssa.

munion, Gregory identifies the partaking of the blood of Christ with a drunkenness that makes man lose his wits. He then quotes various examples from the Holy Scriptures in order to support his position, among them the example of Paul. The apostle to the nations, Gregory writes, was mad for God and logical in his dealings with men. He always preached justly and soberly, while he was nevertheless in ecstasy under the influence of the divine.³⁵ The description of Paul's preaching as a state of "sober madness" (σώφρων μανία) testifies, along with the image of the soul's wings, to Gregory's familiarity with the *Phaidros*, as well as his desire to then elaborate the Platonic teaching in this treatise, in relation to *erōs*, in the service of the Christian faith. Inspired by the Bridegroom's urging towards his friends to revel at his wedding banquet, Gregory incorporates the motif of godly madness within the worship of the Church, thus disproving the claims of those who speak of a "linguistic atavism" or a superficial Platonic influence upon his theological thought.³⁶ Moreover, his entire commentary upon the *Song of Songs*, from the proem to its final paragraphs, is filled with traditional topoi of Platonic philosophy. Besides the *Phaidros* or *Symposium*, other Platonic dialogues also served Gregory as philosophical sources for his commentary. The contribution of the *Republic*, in particular, is definitive in regard to the psychological analyses that it provides. Gregory repeatedly turns to the *Respublica* in relation to the inner structure of human existence in order to decrypt the mystical symbols of the poem from the Old Testament.³⁷ His interpretation of verses 3.7–8 is indicative, concerning the "bed of Solomon", to which I would now like to direct our attention.

"It is Solomon's bed! Round about it stand sixty brave men, of the brave-men of Israel;/ they are all holding swords, masters of war; each one has a sword at his hip that repels the alarms of the night".³⁸ These words, which the chorus of the *Song* addresses to the "daughters of Jerusalem",³⁹ are primarily intended for the Bride, according to the Church father. As Gregory explains

35 See *Cant* x (308,5–309,14) and *Phaidros* 244a–245c, 249d–250a. See already Clement of Alexandria, *Quis dives salvetur*, XXXVIII 1.

36 See Daniélou, *Platonisme*, 216–218, 220, who cites further E. v. Ivánka, "Vom Platonismus zur Theorie der Mystik: Zur Erkenntnislehre Gregors von Nyssa", *Scholastik* XI (1936) 192. Likewise, H.U. von Balthasar, "Zur Ortsbestimmung christlicher Mystik", in: H.U. von Balthasar—A.M. Haas—W. Beierwaltes (eds.), *Grundfragen der Mystik*, Einsiedeln 1974, 49.

37 See especially *Cant* I (GNO VI 29,20–31,8); IV (101,20–103,5); VIII (250,18–251,7); IX (287,8–288,3); X (298,1–21); XII (350,2–19); XIV (413,18–414,2).

38 Translation into English made from a modern Greek translation by poet G. Seferis, *Asma Asmaton: Metaphrase*, Athens 1972, 31.

39 Ct 3.10–11.

to us in his sixth homily, the “friends of the Bridegroom” are describing to the Bride the beauty of the royal bed (βασιλική κλίνη) where she will lie down with him, so that she will long for him even more.⁴⁰ However, if the Bridegroom’s friends do in fact desire to intensify the Bride’s longing for her future husband, it is unclear to what degree they will achieve this in saying what they do. The description of the royal bed surrounded in a circle by sixty hardened Israelite warriors armed with swords would most likely frighten a young girl, instead of making her desire to unite with her beloved there. Gregory, of course, does not ignore the contradiction inherent in his interpretation. “What kind of decoration for a bridal chamber are sixty armed men who know only the mayhem of war and whose only beauty is their drawn sword?”, he asks his reader,⁴¹ in order to go on to give the answer himself through a bold allegorical interpretation of the imagery that corresponds to the chorus’ words. As he maintains, divine beauty differs from physical beauty. While physical beauty captivates with its charm and sweetness, divine beauty unnerves and frightens man. In addition, the desire that it inspires in his soul has no relation to physical desire. The base desire of the flesh (ἐπιθυμία) that is present throughout all the members of the body, as Gregory mentions, sets up an ambush in the intellect (νοῦς) and enslaves it, just like a gang of robbers waiting to attack its victim. This, of course, goes against God’s will, as Paul emphasizes in his *Epistle to the Romans*: “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God”.⁴² Divine *erōs*, on the other hand, does not paralyze human logic in its passionate excitement. The lovers’ embrace and kisses, during which the one melts and faints at the touch of the other, are entirely foreign to divine *erōs*; instead, it is cultivated by “fearful and awesome bravery”. The “brave passion” (ὁ ἀνδρώδης θυμός) frightens and puts to flight the “gang of pleasures” (λόχος τῆς ἡδονῆς), so that the pure beauty of the soul that is unmixed with passion may be revealed.⁴³ “Inevitably, then”, Gregory concludes, “the bridal chamber of the king is described as being surrounded by armed men. Through their experience of war and with the sword, which they are ready to take from its sheath at their thighs, they frighten and terrify the dark thoughts of the heart that, within the deep darkness of night, hurl themselves at the virtuous thoughts with spears and bows”.⁴⁴

40 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 189,16–190,3).

41 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 190,18–191,1).

42 Rm 8,7; *Cant VI* (GNO VI 191,9–18).

43 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 191,18–192,7).

44 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 192,7–12).

I believe it is clear from the above excerpt what line of thought Gregory follows in order to solve the riddle in the words of the chorus: by interpreting the royal bed as a symbol of the human heart, he likens the bravery of the warriors that guard it to a virtue of the spiritual life. The "sixty brave men of Israel" essentially constitute a poetic allegory for the resistance that the faithful christian shows against the passions. The various characteristics that are attributed to them in the text of the Old Testament support Gregory in his interpretation: The Israeli heritage foreshadows the Church, the new chosen people of God; the sword at their thighs represents the virtues of self-restraint and temperance; their number symbolizes the protection of the bodily senses against sin, while the bridal chamber that is shielded from "the alarms of the night" typifies the rest of the faithful christian, who has achieved freedom from passion and sin within the embrace of God.⁴⁵ Gregory, in fact, implies that the christian people are headed en masse towards the ideal of passionlessness.⁴⁶ However, beyond the ecclesiological dimension that the brave men of the *Song* acquire as the ideal model for the christian faithful, Gregory also identifies them with a certain power of the human soul, the passionate aspect (θυμός); a power that fights against the desires of the flesh, maintaining the intellect (νοῦς) untouched by their attacks. Gregory's mention of θυμός and the particular role that he assigns it in the intellect's resistance to carnal desires testify to his dependence upon Platonic anthropology. It is not by coincidence that in the dialogue *Respublica* Socrates divides the soul, just as Gregory does, into three parts: the intellect (λογιστικόν), the appetite (ἐπιθυμητικόν) and the passionate aspect of its nature (θυμοειδές).⁴⁷ Socrates also believes, just as the Church father does, that the relationship between the first two parts is characterized by rivalry. The mass of desires, untamed by nature, plots against the intellect and rises up against it in order to seize the authority exercised by it.⁴⁸ This is where, according to Platonic Socrates, the passionate aspect intervenes: it charges against the desires and forces them to retreat and submit to the intellect. "In the dissension that unfolds within the soul", the wise old man states in the *Respublica*, "the passionate aspect takes up weapons in order to defend

45 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 193,2–199,7).

46 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 197,13–15). See also further down in the same homily (GNO VI 197,17–198,2).

47 *Respublica* IV 435c ff. Gregory frequently uses the terms λογιστικόν, ἐπιθυμητικόν and θυμοειδές, fully aware of their philosophical origins. See *Vit Moys* II (GNO VII/1 62,9–63,9; 71,3–19); *Epist can* (GNO III/5 1–2); *Op hom XXIX* (PG 44 237A–B); *Antirrh* (GNO III/1 142,5–15) etc. For the tripartite division of the soul in general in Gregory, see H.F. Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, New York 19712, 12–25 and Daniélou, *Platonisme*, 61–83.

48 *Respublica* IV 439d and ff., 442a–b, 444b.

logic”.⁴⁹ As its ally and faithful servant, the passionate aspect always stands at the side of logic, fighting bravely to make sure that its decisions are put into action.⁵⁰ This is why bravery (ἀνδρεία) is the virtue that suits it best. “And I imagine we characterize a man brave based upon this portion of his soul”, Socrates says a few lines further down, “that is, when his passionate aspect preserves the commands of his logic untouched by either sadness or joy”.⁵¹

Thus, there is no doubt that the *Respublica* influences our Cappadocian father in relation to the way in which he interprets the *Song of Songs*. Its teaching concerning the human soul is to be found behind the connections that he makes in relation to the bridal chamber of the king. As he states, echoing Plato’s views from the fourth book of the *Respublica*, the warriors that surround the chamber represent the passionate aspect that frightens with its bravery and turns to flight the “gang of pleasures”.⁵² Finally, the connection between divine *erōs* and bravery leads us back again to the dialogue *Symposion*. At the end of his speech, having set out the successive levels of initiation into the Beautiful, Socrates weaves the encomium of *erōs* that scorns gold, fancy clothing and the physical beauty of youths, being directed rather straight on towards the Form of the Beauty. He calls this *erōs* brave (ἀνδρεῖος) and he emphasizes its power to raise man from the sensory to the intelligible world.⁵³ Once more, the wise

49 *Ibidem* IV 440e.

50 *Ibidem* IV 442b.

51 *Ibidem* IV 442b–c. Cf. *ibidem* IX 590a–b.

52 In other words, the desires or the ἐπιθυμητικόν, according to standard Platonic terminology (*Cant* VI [192,4–5]). Of course, the allegorization of the “sixty brave men of Israel” as a symbol of the battle between the human soul and the passions is not due exclusively to Gregory’s philosophical temperament. The flesh-spirit dialectic that is found throughout Pauline epistolography and that is often expressed by the apostle through metaphors, supplies the appropriate framework for Gregory’s interpretation. He refers again and again to Paul’s epistles: *Romans*, *Ephesians* and even *Second Corinthians* in order to demonstrate the violent conflict with the passions and temptations of the flesh that faith in Jesus Christ presupposes. See *ibidem* (191,13–18,192,11–12,197,13–14,198,6–7) and *Rm* 7.23; 8.7; 13,12; 2 *Cor* 10,4; *Eph* 6,10–13; 2 *Cor* 6,7 respectively. Gregory’s free interweaving of phrases, forms of thought and literary motifs from Paul and Platonic literature constitutes one of the most interesting and, at the same time, charming aspects of his commentary. Here also the Cappadocian father is following the precedent set by Origen, see e.g. *Cant*, prol. 2, 16 (SC 375, 103).

53 *Symposion* 211d–212b. Ioannis Sykoutris, commenting upon the above passage from the *Symposion*, notes: “Bravery is praised in particular because the ascension is long and difficult; thus endurance is required. Moreover, this *erōs* was a war against the flesh and against the prevailing ethics of the day, as Alcibiades’ narration will soon show [215a–222b]” in *Platonos Symposion*, intr.-text.-trans.-comm., Athens 200218, n. 6 p. 185. Cf. also for the bravery of *erōs Symposion* 203d.

old man's views coincide entirely with Gregory's, verifying the close relation of Platonic love to the mystical theology as described in the commentary of the Church father *On the Song of Songs*.⁵⁴

Bibliography

- von Balthasar, H.U. "Zur Ortsbestimmung christlicher Mystik", in: H.U. von Balthasar—A.M. Haas—W. Beierwaltes (eds.), *Grundfragen der Mystik*, Einsiedeln 1974, 37–71.
- Böhm, Th. *Theoria—Unendlichkeit—Aufstieg: Philosophische Implikationen zu De Vita Moysis von Gregor von Nyssa*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 35, Leiden 1996.
- Cherniss, H.F. *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, New York 19712.
- Daniélou, J. *Platonisme et théologie mystique: La doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1944.
- Dünzl, F. "Gregory von Nyssa's *Homilien zum Canticum* auf dem Hintergrund seiner *Vita Moysis*", *VigChr* 44 (1999) 371–381.
- Ivánka, E. von "Vom Platonismus zur Theorie der Mystik: Zur Erkenntnislehre Gregors von Nyssa", *Scholastik* XI (1936) 163–195.
- Jaeger, W. *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius*, Leiden 1954.
- Louth, A. *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, Oxford 1981.
- Robin, L. *Platon: Œuvres complètes*, Vol. IV/2 (*Le Banquet*), Paris 1929.
- Mosshammer, A.A. "Gregory's Intellectual Development: A Comparison of the Homilies on the Beatitudes with the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*", in: H.R. Drobner—A. Viciano (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes, Proceedings of the 8th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2000, 360–367.
- Norris, R.A. *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Writings of the Greco-Roman World 13, Atlanta 2012.
- Price, A.W. *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*, Oxford 1989.
- Seferis, G. *Asma Asmaton: Metagraphe*, Athens 1972.

54 It is worth noting that Gregory's mysticism combines the entire philosophical tradition that begins with the Platonic dialogues and stretches out to Plotinus and the Neoplatonic philosophers. For details, see Cherniss, *The Platonism*, 24, 42, 47, 50–52, 56, 61; Daniélou, *Platonisme*, 27, 37–39, 41–43, 58, 99–100, 136–137, 157, 164, 175, 211–217 and Böhm, *Theoria*, 84 ff.

The Metapoetics of Μεταποίησης

Scot Douglass

In the Preface to his *In Canticum Canticorum*, Gregory puts forth a rigorous defense of the way he reads Solomon's ancient text, justifying his adaptations of the Philonic-Origenist approach, the so-called "Alexandrian" school, against the limitations of a more literal reading.¹ Although this justification is quite consistent with methodological arguments put forward by Gregory elsewhere,² it is my thesis that his Trinitarian reading of the *Canticle* has a more complicated origin that reflects his theology of transformation, μεταποίησης—a transformation in this case that must be rhetorically performed on the text, itself. This rhetorical maneuver not only accomplishes a μεταποίησης of the text from a highly erotic historical narrative into an erotic philosophical text, but radically transforms it from being a text written by the historical Solomon into a text authored by and, therefore, inhabited by Christ. As a result, the act of reading the *Canticle* under the guidance of Gregory becomes an encounter with Christ and, via Christ, with the Trinity. Reading as encounter, reading as event, is reminiscent of the early and universal adulation that Heidegger received as a seminar teacher in Marburg, years before he published *Sein und Zeit*: there was a new teacher in Germany who was not "thinking about Plato" but one who was "thinking Plato".³ In a similar vein, Gregory in the *Canticle* is not explaining the Trinity, he is exploring the Trinity. He is not talking about encountering the bridegroom, he is encountering the bridegroom in the text: "For by what is written there [in the *Canticle*], the soul is in a certain manner led as a bride into an incorporeal and spiritual and undefiled marriage with God".⁴ The conceptual loss of the preposition "about" and replaced in the previous sentence

1 See R. Heine, "Gregory of Nyssa's Apology for Allegory", *Vigilae Christianae* 38 (1984), 360–370, and M. Ludlow, "Anatomy: Investigating the Body of Texts in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa", in: S. Douglass—M. Ludlow, *Reading the Church Fathers*, London 2011, 132–152, for discussions about how Gregory reads.

2 *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 5–7; tr. Norris 3–5).

3 Hannah Arendt's "birthday speech" at Heidegger's 80th birthday speaks of this reputation and comments: "[...] for example, Plato was not talked about, nor was his theory of ideas spelled out [...]. The rumor put it quite simply: thinking is alive again; the cultural treasures of the past, which everyone had believed dead, are being made to speak again [...]. There is a teacher; one can learn, perhaps, to think", in: U. Ludz, *Letters 1925–1975: Hannah Arendt-Martin Heidegger*, tr. Andrew Shields, New York, 2004, 151.

4 *Cant* 1 (GNO VI 15; tr. Norris 15).

with “as” is at the heart of Gregory’s reading of the *Canticle*; it is at the heart of his impossible ἔρως for *adiastemic* union with Christ. My reading, therefore, of Gregory’s reading strategy is something of a Foucauldian archaeological reading, a look beneath the organizational structures he explicitly defends to the operative structures at work in producing Trinitarian knowledge.⁵ To do so, I will first examine passages about μεταποίησις found in the last and first Homilies, *Homily 15* and *Homily 1*, then examine a highly creative and relevant passage from Plato’s *Symposium*, and conclude by returning to Gregory’s preface.

1 Transformations at the Beginning of Homily 15

As is common throughout Gregory’s homiletic commentary on the *Canticle*, he does not begin *Homily 15* by directly addressing that portion of Solomon’s text he has just quoted at length—in this case, Ct 6.1–9. Instead, he weaves together a number of Biblical stories whose relevance he assures us five paragraphs later will be self-evident to the “well-instructed reader”. In doing so, he invites readers to acknowledge their initial confusion and then search for deeper structures of relevance brought together by Gregory in his guidance of his readers to Christ. Connecting the introductory stories in *Homily 15* are the following threads:

1. an individual is transformed by coming into the presence of the divine;
2. the content of the transformation is directly related to that aspect of the divine particularly present in the encounter;
3. the transformed individual is expected to live out the particularity of his or her transformation on behalf of others,

5 In the “Preface” to *The Order of Things*, Foucault argues for a more spontaneous and organic ordering of knowledge, between reflexive cultural codes and their intellectual defense. “This middle region, then, in as far as it makes manifest the modes of being of order, can be posited as the most fundamental of all: anterior to words, perceptions, and gestures, which are then taken to be more or less exact, more or less happy expressions of it (which is why this experience of order in its pure primary state always plays a critical role); more solid, more archaic, less dubious, always more “true” than the theories that attempt to give those expressions explicit form, exhaustive application, or philosophical foundation. Thus, in every culture, between the use of what one might call the ordering codes and reflections upon order itself, there is the pure experience of order and of its modes of being” (xxi, tr. Vintage 1994). I am arguing that Gregory orders his experience of reading the *Canticle* in terms of an encounter with Christ’s inhabitation of the text, an encounter that is more “true” to Gregory than “the theories that attempt to give those expressions explicit form [...] or philosophical foundation”.

4. in the case of the New Testament stories, the transformation involves a specific guide who brings the person into the transformative presence of Christ,
5. and frequently, but not in every transformation, the change in the individual is marked by an appropriate change of name—a rhetorical μεταποίησις to match the substantive μεταποίησις.

Homily 15 begins with a creative reference to Philip that quickly transforms into a reference to Andrew and Peter:

Philip the apostle is declared to be from the city of Andrew and Peter. I mention this because to me at any rate it seems to be a way of honoring Philip to report that he is a fellow-citizen of that pair of brothers who have been made subjects of wonder and admiration by the Gospel account (ἱστορίας) of them.⁶

Although Gregory will talk about Philip at great length in paragraphs 3 and 4, he introduces him in the first sentence, it seems, simply as a way to talk about Andrew and Peter. Gregory justifies this by saying they were from the same city, they lived in proximity to each other and that this proximity allows the transfer of honor from Andrew and Peter to Philip. Although Gregory will describe the parallel movements of Andrew's leading Peter to Christ and Philip's leading Nathaniel to Christ, he leaves his "well-instructed" readers to make this observation on their own, while explicitly explaining the role place and proximity can play in the transfer of honor. As will be seen, Gregory's understanding of μεταποίησις is deeply committed to the proxemics of transformation.

Before returning to Philip two paragraphs later, Gregory recounts (in a manner reminiscent of the opening of Plato's *Symposium*) the chain of interactions between desiring subjects that brought Peter to Christ: (1) Andrew heard the proclamation regarding Jesus made by John the Baptist, "Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world"; (2) Andrew repeated this proclamation to his brother Simon, who then, (3) along with Andrew, went and found Jesus.⁷ Equally important to the proxemics of transformation in Gregory's *Cantic* is the role of ἔρως. Regarding this encounter between Jesus, Peter and Andrew, Gregory notes:

⁶ *Cant xv* (GNO VI 431; tr. Norris 459).

⁷ *Ibidem*.

By changing (ὑπαλλαγῆς) his name—for he was both called and in fact became Peter instead of Simon—the Lord transmuted (μεταποιεῖται) him into something more divine [...]. That great one, Peter, however, did not progress toward this grace bit by bit but at one and the same moment heard his brother and believed in the Lamb and was perfected by faith and, having attached himself to the Rock, became a rock.⁸

Andrew guides Peter into the presence of Christ and “the Lord transforms (μεταποιεῖται) him into something more divine”. As with the transfer of honor from Andrew and Peter to Philip, this transformation takes place via proximity. This is at work both in general, Peter becomes more divine in the presence of the divine, and in particular, Peter becomes “a rock” by coming into the presence of, “attach[ing] himself to”, *the* Rock.

In the midst of recounting the metapoetic narrative, the metapoetic ἱστορία, of Andrew and Peter, Gregory weaves into the homily’s introduction three more accounts of transformation that take place via proximity and which are also accompanied by a correlative name change:

It is indeed true that, at a much more mature age and after many theophanies, the Lord gave Abraham and Sarah a share in the blessing that stems from names: through a change of names he constituted the one of them a father and the other one a ruler (ὁ κύριος τὸν μὲν πατέρα τὴν δὲ ἄρχουσιν διὰ τῆς τῶν ὀναμάτων μεταποιήσεως χειροτονήσας). In the same way, Jacob too, but after a night-long wrestling match, was judged worthy of the name and aptitude of Israel.⁹

Lest we miss the role of proximity in the transformations of Abraham and Sarah, Gregory adds “after many theophanies”. Then, “[i]n the same way”, the same way as Abraham, Sarah and Peter, Jacob came into the presence of the Lord, somehow physically grappled with Him and was transformed into “Israel”. The text from Genesis, which the “well-instructed reader” would know, makes the specific point that the name “Israel” was chosen because Jacob had “contended” or “striven” with God.¹⁰ After these examples of μεταποίησις, Gregory

8 *Cant* XV (GNO VI 431; tr. Norris 459).

9 *Cant* XV (GNO VI 431–432; tr. Norris 459).

10 Philo wrote an entire treatise on the significance of name changes in the Jewish Scriptures, *De Mutatione Nominum*, in which he puts his primary focus on the name changes associated with Abraham and Sarah.

returns to Philip whom he so briefly mentioned in the first sentence, underlining yet again his spatial relationship to Peter and Andrew.

As to this Philip, then, a worthy fellow-citizen of persons of such distinction and eminence, once he had become the Lord's "find" (εὑρεμα) as the Gospel says, Jesus "*found* (Εὗρίσκει) Philip", he was made a follower of the Word who said to him, "Follow me". And when he had drawn near to the true light, like some lamp he drew from it a share of its light; then he enlightened Nathanael by illuminating for him the mystery of true religion in these words: "We have found (εὗρήκαμεν) the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee" [...]. At this point, Philip becomes his guide (ὁδηγός) toward grace and says, "Come and see".¹¹

Gregory overtly connects the outworking of divine transformation to proximity with particular aspects of the Lord manifest in that encounter and particularly evident in the transformed person's subsequent guidance of others. Philip is the "Lord's find" (εὑρεμα)—which the Liddell-Scott-Jones glosses as "*invention, discovery, thing discovered not by chance but by thought*"—and then he becomes "the finder" for Nathaniel. Like Peter becoming a rock after encountering *the* Rock, Philip becomes a finder after being found by Jesus. In addition, Philip comes into the presence of the "true light" and "like some lamp he drew from it a share of its light; then he *enlightened* Nathanael by *illuminating* for him the mystery of true religion in these words: We have found him [...]". Although this play of words can seem on the surface as perhaps an artifact of Gregory being rhetorically too clever,¹² he is making a number of deeper points about the nature of μεταποίησις.

2 The Transformation in Homily 1

The entire text of Gregory's *In Canticum Canticorum* is concerned with transformation, transformation into the divine by coming ever closer to the presence of the divine. Whether conceptualized in the idea of a methodical ascent, entering the holy of holies or pictured in terms of nuptial union, this is the well-recognized content and purpose of the commentary. But before Gregory can

11 *Cant* XV (GNO VI 432–433; tr. Norris 459–461).

12 See Gregory of Nyssa's Letter 13 to Libanius to get a sense of how much Gregory appreciated his own rhetorical cleverness.

use his comments on the *Canticle* to promote the transformation of his fourth-century readers, “that some direction might be given to the fleshly folk for sake of the spiritual and immaterial welfare of their souls”¹³—there is a more fundamental transformation that he must first perform on the text, itself. The Preface is largely devoted to a defense of this transformation, of turning “historical narratives” (τὰ ἱστορικά διηγήματα¹⁴) into philosophy, of turning a text about the erotic relationship between a bride and a bridegroom into the erotic relationship between the believer and Christ. Gregory’s explicit defense takes the form of an argument about the nature of reading texts saturated with images and phrases that cannot be understood in a literal sense with any profit. Such texts necessitate a deeper reading. Whether you call such a reading *hyponoetic*, *anagogical* or *allegorical*—Gregory doesn’t care¹⁵—he gives multiple examples from other Biblical narratives (historical texts, the prophets and most numerous the Gospels) where little if any profit can be derived from a so-called literal, face-value reading.

Despite this extended defense, I am arguing that the more fundamental transformation of the text of the *Canticum Canticorum* takes place in the same way transformation will take place throughout the homilies and specifically highlighted at the beginning of *Homily 15*: via a close encounter with the divine. It is this textual transformation that allows Gregory to be the reader’s guide to Christ just as Philip and Andrew were for Nathaniel and Peter. Gregory performs this transformation in *Homily 1*:

Now the one who warrants this legislation for us is Solomon, whose wisdom, as God himself bears witness, has no measure because it is in the same degree unequaled by and incomparable to the wisdom both of his predecessors and of his posterity. Nothing that is real was hidden from him.

Do you suppose, then, I am speaking of the Solomon from Beersheba, the one who sacrificed a thousand oxen on the mountain, who made use (bad χρησάμενον) of the idol from Sidon for sin’s purposes? Surely not! In this case, another Solomon is meant: the Solomon who “was born of the seed of David according to the flesh”, whose name is Peace, the true King of Israel, the builder of God’s temple, the One who has received knowledge of all things, whose wisdom is without limit, whose being, indeed,

13 *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 4; tr. Norris 3).

14 *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 5; tr. Norris 5).

15 *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 5; tr. Norris 3–5).

is Wisdom and truth, and to whom belongs every name and idea that is exalted and worthy of God.

This Solomon used (good χρησάμενος) our Solomon as an instrument and by means of his voice speaks with us—first in *Proverbs*, then in *Ecclesiastes*, and after that in the philosophy of the *Song of Songs*, which is now before us—and by his word shows us, in systematic and orderly fashion, the way that leads upward to perfection.¹⁶

It is precisely at this moment, despite his extended literary justifications for reading the text allegorically, that the highly erotic text of Solomon of Beersheba becomes the philosophical text upon which he will comment. Just as Simon was transformed into Peter “the rock” by coming into the presence of the Rock; and Philip became the light and finder by drawing near to the true light who had found him; and Abram and Sarai became Abraham and Sarah after many theophanies; and Jacob became Israel after wrestling with God, the *Canticum Canticorum* becomes a Christological and Trinitarian text when it is brought into the presence of its true author, Christ the second person of the Trinity. As with the narrative examples from *Homily 15*, this transformation is accompanied by a name change, a proliferation of names worthy of the calculus of the many names attributed to Christ. Because the text has been transformed by its direct association with Christ, entering the *Canticum Canticorum* is like entering the “innermost divine sanctuary”.¹⁷ The transformation of the text into a Trinitarian text performs the actual transformation discussed in the Preface: the transformation of the “historical narrative” (τὰ ἱστορικά διηγήματα) into philosophy whose fundamental goal is the spiritual profit of the reader.¹⁸ It is Gregory, therefore, who having been found by Jesus, finds Jesus in the *Canticum Canticorum*, and, like Philip the “found-finder”, becomes a guide to his readers to make the same discovery. In other words, it is this maneuver that undergirds his broad maneuver of reading beneath the text: this is the *hypo-hyponoetic* moment.

If this is the case, it gives further support to what I understand to be the doctrinal goals and methodological approach on display in the volume *Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, edited by Sarah Coakley. That is,

- Gregory’s *In Canticum Canticorum* is every bit, if not more so, a Trinitarian text as is the *Ad Ablabium*,

¹⁶ Cant 1 (GNO VI 16–17; tr. Norris 17–19).

¹⁷ Cant 1 (GNO VI 22,25).

¹⁸ Cant 1 (GNO VI 3–4).

- the complex Trinitarian images found in the *Canticle* cannot be reduced to decorative images subordinate to “superior” arguments from propositional treatises,
- the desire to know *about* God cannot be separated from a desire *for* God,
- theological knowledge of God cannot be disconnected from spiritual growth toward God,
- a “Trinitarian grammar” can only emerge from multi-genre Trinitarian texts, from language that not only speaks about the Trinity but reflects inhabitation by the Trinity.

Stated somewhat differently, whereas the doctrinal texts of Gregory aim to explain Christ and the Trinity, the fundamental *σχόπος* of the *Canticum Canticorum* is to encounter Christ and the Trinity. It is also worth noting that this takes place in a historical community of “found-finders”: Solomon, Philip, Andrew, Peter, Origen and now Gregory.

3 Plato's Symposium

Central to Gregory's transformation of the *Canticle* into a philosophical text, of his expansive reading of the *Canticle* as a place where the reader encounters the Trinity in the text, is his methodological appropriation of Plato and particularly the *Symposium*. Beginning with Cherniss' *The Platonism of Gregory* (1930) and explored more deeply in Daniélou's *Platonisme et théologie mystique* (1944), much of course has been written about Gregory's Platonism and one does not need to know Plato very well to see his fingerprints throughout the *Canticle*. In fact, a philologically oriented Plato scholar might find Platonic allusions as numerous on most pages as the number of Biblical references. That being said, Gregory's relationship to Plato in respect to this essay has much more to do with Platonic methodology than Platonic doctrine. I would like to focus on one passage from the *Symposium* that has particular relevance to Gregory's production of his commentary on the *Canticle*: Plato's myth of the Birth of Ἔρως.

“That's a rather long story,” she [Diotima] replied, “but I'll tell you anyway. Following the birth of Aphrodite, the other gods were having a feast, including Resource (Πόρος), the son of Invention. When they'd had dinner, Poverty (Πενία) came to beg, as people do at feasts, and so she was by the gate. Resource was drunk with nectar (this was before wine was discovered), went into the garden of Zeus, and fell into drunken sleep. Poverty formed the plan of relieving her lack of resources by having a child by Resource; she slept with him and became pregnant with Love” (Ἔρως). So the reason Love became a follower and

attendant of Aphrodite is because he was conceived on the day of her birth; also he is naturally a lover of beauty and Aphrodite is beautiful.

Because he is the son of Resource and Poverty, Love's situation is like this. First of all, he's always poor; far from being sensitive and beautiful, as is commonly supposed, he's tough, with hardened skin, without shoes or home. He always sleeps rough, on the ground, with no bed, lying in doorways and by roads in the open air; sharing his mother's nature, he always lives in a state of need. On the other hand, taking after his father, he schemes to get hold of beautiful and good things. He's brave, impetuous and intense; a formidable hunter, always weaving tricks; he desires knowledge and is resourceful in getting it; a lifelong lover of wisdom; clever at using magic, drugs and sophistry.¹⁹

Plato takes the well-known story of Aphrodite's natural birth from Zeus and Dione and then apparently just makes up the rest;²⁰ that is, he takes a well-known narrative and significantly embellishes it to do philosophy. Gregory's homilies do something very similar: in the GNO volume VI, there are approximately 48 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches of Greek text devoted to the actual words of the *Canticum Canticorum* in contrast to 1,631 inches of commentary—approximately a 33.5 to 1 ratio. As seen with the prefatory remarks in *Homily 15*, there is something deeply creative in Gregory's production of his commentary that resonates with Plato's production of myth. That is, Gregory's 33.5:1 ratio is not the result of his homilies being a precursor of the modern, exhaustive, scholarly commentary, but rather the wildly expansive and creative interaction between a rhetorically imaginative reader and the linguistic manifestation of Christ.

Both Gregory and Plato begin at the same starting point: poverty (Πενία). Created nature, endowed with incredible abilities and powers of production, begins its pursuit of God from a place of radical poverty. One of the clearest points in all of Gregory's output is the distance between the created and uncreated natures, the limitations this creates and our complete and utter dependency on God to reveal Himself to us.²¹ For Plato, Ἐρως is the offspring of Poverty, Πενία, and Resource, Πόρος. Gregory states in *Homily 15*:

19 Plato, *The Symposium*, C. Gill (ed.), London 2003, 39–40; *Symposium* 203b–d.

20 See Christopher Rowe's *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing*, Cambridge 2010 and the collection of essays in: C. Partenie (ed.), *Plato's Myths*, Cambridge 2011 for discussions of Plato as creative myth-maker and the complicated but integral relationship between myth and philosophy.

21 The foundational scholarship on the ontological distance between creator and creation

Our poverty, though, has not the strength to lay hold of the treasures of the text. Yet to avoid the condemnation that befalls idleness, and for the sake of the one who commanded us to search the Scriptures, we do not shrink from contributing a bit of our own sweat to the task.²²

This simultaneous recognition of poverty and the temptation, therefore, to simply quit and not engage the theological task is pervasive throughout all of Gregory's work.²³ But in each case, it is desire that overcomes the temptation to quit the pursuit, a deep desire for God that is willing to risk limited success, *epinoetic* error and ontological frustration. Gregory's act of πόρος is glossed by "we do not shrink from contributing a bit of our own sweat". Gregory engages this tension in his opening comments in *Homily* 5:

This reading from the philosophy of the *Song of Songs* sets out for us matters that evoke a desire for the contemplation of transcendent goods. At the very same time, it fills our soul with grief as, in a certain way, it creates despair of our grasping the Incomprehensible. For how is it possible to be without grief when one considers that the purified soul—even though through love she has been exalted toward participation in the Good by a whole series of ascents—does not yet seem as the Apostle says, to have laid hold on what she seeks.²⁴

In language deeply resonant with Plato, Gregory speaks of "desire", "contemplation of transcendent goods", "participation in the Good by a whole series of ascents". Ultimately ruled by desire, Gregory, like "Ἐρως, is "brave, impetuous and intense; a formidable hunter, always weaving tricks; he desires knowledge and is resourceful in getting it; a lifelong lover of wisdom; clever at using magic, drugs and sophistry". I think that sums up Christopher Stead's negative judg-

in Gregory's thought are by H.U. von Balthasar, *Présence et pensée: Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1942 and by E. Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Göttingen 1966. For a further analysis of the implications of their work to the questions of language and the doing of theology, see my *Theology of the Gap: Cappadocian Language Theory and the Trinitarian Crisis*, New York 2006.

22 *Cant* XV (GNO VI 457; tr. Norris 485).

23 Gregory's fear of *epinoetic* resourcefulness causes him to pause: "Speculating about the obscure and using the *epinoia* of human reason to search for some kind of knowledge of things hidden, allows admission and currency to false ideas, since speculation about the unknown understands not only what is true to be true, but often also what is false". See *Eun* II 97 (GNO I 255,1–8).

24 *Cant* V (GNO VI 137; tr. Norris 151).

ment of Gregory's argument in "Why not Three Gods" very well: "I have come to think that it [Gregory's "On Not Three Gods"] resembles an accomplished conjuring trick more nearly than a valid theological demonstration [...]"²⁵ Although there *is* justice in the widespread critique of Gregory's inconsistent and non-systematic usage of specific terms (the semantic cluster surrounding the concept of desire in the *Canticle*, for example); his making deficient and incompatible arguments; his twisting of logic to defend slavishly the positions of his brother Basil; his general sloppiness, etc., Gregory has various commitments that make his theological production necessarily more "Resourceful" in the manner described by Plato than a rigorous "valid theological demonstration" as demanded by Stead. Perhaps chief amongst these and certainly most relevant to this brief study is his commitment to the Scriptures. Unlike Plato, for example, who can create myths and transform oral discussions, Gregory begins and ends with the fixed words of the Scriptures. That is, he is forced to address texts, specific diction, multiple genres and concepts that the philosopher might otherwise avoid. Sarah Coakley speaks in *Re-reading Gregory of Nyssa* of the four stunning Trinitarian images that emerge from the *Canticum Canticorum*. They emerge because of the specific diction of the *Canticum Canticorum*. Given the freedom of a philosopher not subject to the Scriptures, Gregory might never have turned, for example, to the metaphor of archery and being "wounded by the arrow of love" to speak of the Trinity and encountering the Trinity—nor being transformed, according to the pattern, in such an encounter to become the arrow, itself.²⁶ This exemplifies Coakley's analysis of the role spiritual maturity plays in Gregory's reading of such passages. That is, it is Gregory's mature encounters with the Trinity that allows him to encounter the Trinity in such otherwise opaque passages—creating richer texts in many ways than the more propositional apologies for doctrinal positions inherited from his brother Basil. As a result, Gregory's reading reflects the ever-increasing creative interplay of Poverty and Resource and results in the genre transformation of historical narratives into philosophy.

Plato ends the Symposium with a genre transformation of his own—comedy and tragedy are brought together by "Ἔρως, embodied in the transformed fig-

25 G.C. Stead, "Why Not Three Gods? The Logic of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Doctrine", in: H.R. Drobner—C. Klock (eds.), *Studien zur Gregor von Nyssa und der Christlichen Spätantike, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. XII, Leiden 1990, 149.

26 See Martin Laird's essay "Under Solomon's Tutelage: The Education of Desire in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*" in: S. Coakley (ed.), *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Oxford 2003, 77–96, and his monograph on the *Song of Songs, Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith*, Oxford 2007.

ure of Socrates, in which the desire for beauty transforms and transcends the particular genres of comedy and tragedy. In a maneuver similar to what I am arguing Gregory has done with the *Canticle*, Plato accomplishes his own transformation in the Alcibiades section of the *Symposium*. Namely, Alcibiades transforms the speeches about Ἔρως into speeches about Socrates. Socrates, it turns out, has been recounting his own story when he was recounting the stories told him by Diotima: he is poor, barefoot, homeless, not beautiful, brave, a formidable hunter, etc. Plato transforms the myth of Ἔρως into the myth of Socrates, Ἔρως being the only subject that Socrates claims to know in the entire Platonic corpus. In a similar fashion, the potential tragedy of our creaturely limitations gets transformed in Gregory, by a combination of faith and hope, into a discourse of ascent, to a discourse of comedy. Theological Ἔρως, as a result, is the simultaneous experience of comedy and tragedy, of poverty and resource, of *diastemic* limitation and spiritual ascent.

Gregory, to his great credit, grasping both πένια and πόρος, allows love and desire to risk grief in his own desire to have transformative encounters with the Triune God and to be a guide to others in bringing them, like Andrew and Philip did for Peter and Nathaniel, into the presence of the Lord—to help others to read the Trinity in the *Canticle* as opposed to reading *about* the Trinity in the *Canticle*.

Bibliography

- von Balthasar, H.U. *Présence et pensée: Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1942.
- Douglass, S. *Theology of the Gap: Cappadocian Language Theory and the Trinitarian Crisis*, New York 2006.
- Heine, R. "Gregory of Nyssa's Apology for Allegory", *Vigilae Christianae* 38 (1984), 360–370.
- Laird, M. "Under Solomon's Tutelage: The Education of Desire in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*" in: S. Coakley (ed.), *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Oxford 2003, 77–96;
- Laird, M. *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith*, Oxford 2007.
- Ludlow, M. "Anatomy: Investigating the Body of Texts in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa", in: S. Douglass—M. Ludlow, *Reading the Church Fathers*, London 2011, 132–152.
- Ludz, U. *Letters 1925–1975: Hannah Arendt-Martin Heidegger*, tr. Andrew Shields, New York, 2004.
- Mühlenberg, E. *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Göttingen 1966.
- Rowe, C. *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing*, Cambridge 2010.

Partenie, C. (ed.). *Plato's Myths*, Cambridge 2011.

Stead, G.C. "Why Not Three Gods? The Logic of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Doctrine", in: H.R. Drobner—C. Klock (eds.), *Studien zur Gregor von Nyssa und der Christlichen Spätantike*, *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. XI, Leiden 1990, 149–163.

“Quel divino e puro amore dello sposo invisibile”¹: Gregorio di Nissa, la *Vita di Macrina* e le *Omellerie sul Cantico dei Cantici*

Roberta Franchi

Ricche di contenuto per trasmettere l'inarrestabilità dell'anima umana in una progressiva unione con Dio,² le *Omellerie sul Cantico dei Cantici* di Gregorio di Nissa offrono un tema che può dischiudere un interessante campo di ricerca: leggere la *Vita di Macrina* anche alla luce di queste omellerie. Se infatti sono stati messi in evidenza da vari studiosi i richiami al trattato *Sulla Verginità*,³ dove circa nove anni prima il Nisseno ha affermato il primato della verginità, in quanto perfezione propria della natura divina e incorporea,⁴ non sono stati indagati i possibili parallelismi tra l'esperienza della sposa del *Cantico* e Macrina, pur trattandosi di opere diverse per genere e composizione. Come si presenta la sposa? Quale esperienza mistica vive? E Macrina? Può assumere i tratti della sposa del *Cantico*?

1 L'eros, l'agape e la sposa nelle Omellerie sul Cantico

Come è ben noto, la composizione delle *Omellerie sul Cantico* ruota attorno al concetto chiave dell'ἐπέκτασις: esse si prefiggono di presentare una serie di esperienze successive dell'anima la quale, dopo avere avuto un contatto, seppure parziale con lo sposo divino, approfondisce sempre di più il suo rapporto spirituale con lui.⁵ Il Nisseno precisa che tutte le esperienze mistiche descritte sono proprie dell'anima purificata: “l'anima che si è purificata (ἡ δὲ κεκαθαρμένη ψυχή) e che non è più coperta da lebbra carnale, si prende cura del tesoro dei

1 *Macr* 22 (GNO VIII/1 396; SC 178 214; tr. Giannarelli 125).

2 Cf. I.G. Gargano, *La teoria di Gregorio di Nissa sul Cantico dei Cantici. Indagine su alcune indicazioni di metodo esegetico*, Roma 1981.

3 Cf. P. Maraval (éd.), *Saint Grégoire de Nysse, La vie de Sainte Macrine*, Paris 1971 (SC 178); A.M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger. Philosopher of God*, Turnhout 2008, 53; E. Giannarelli, *S. Gregorio di Nissa, La vita di S. Macrina*, Milano 1988, 39–40; W. Völker, *Gregorio di Nissa, filosofo e mistico*, Milano 1993, 224–228.

4 Cf. Gregorio di Nissa, *Virg* 2 (SC 119, 262–264).

5 Cf. J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et Théologie mystique*, Paris 1944, 317.

veri beni (τὸν τῶν ἀγαθῶν θησαυρὸν).⁶ Creata da Dio a sua immagine e somiglianza, e pertanto come la più perfetta fra le creature, l'anima, in virtù del libero arbitrio, ha scelto liberamente la strada del peccato: da questo momento in poi si è rivestita dell'inclinazione alla passione, simboleggiata dalle "tuniche di pelle".⁷ L'uomo, intrappolato nelle maglie del peccato, è dunque attanagliato dalle passioni come da un'armata nemica contro cui occorre combattere.⁸ Pur trattandosi di una lotta difficile, alla passione si deve opporre il ragionamento, un mezzo in grado di sconfiggerla; poiché la passione è per sua natura sempre qualcosa di irrazionale, essa può essere debellata alla radice tramite una giusta educazione: il logos deve prendere il sopravvento.⁹ L'impegno ascetico, che mira al ripristino della condizione originaria, si imbatte in primo luogo nella lotta per riplasmare le passioni: occorre liberarsi da esse per progredire nell'ascesa. Ecco tre termini chiave: passione, progresso, ascesi.¹⁰

Quando l'anima vive isolata, separata dai sensi e senza essere perturbata da nessuno di essi, allora il corpo viene paralizzato dal sopore e davvero si può dire che la vista si è addormentata per l'inattività, avendo disprezzato quegli spettacoli che distraggono chi ha occhi da bambino. In virtù della contemplazione dei veri beni, la sposa disprezza tutte le realtà sensibili, perché l'anima perfetta non presta più alcuna attenzione alle realtà corporee, ma orienta il suo sguardo verso i beni invisibili che la sovrastano. E mentre i sensi sono inattivi, che cosa resta? La potenza del cuore. Essa rimane integra e il suo pensiero si dirige verso l'alto, rimanendo intangibile e imperturbabile al movimento dei sensi.¹¹ Gregorio prosegue il suo discorso, spiegando che nell'uomo vi sono due forme di piacere: quello che agisce nell'anima grazie alla libertà delle passioni e quello che opera nel corpo servendosi di esso.¹² Il Nisseno qualifica il πάθος in due diversi modi: uno secondo il significato più stretto, vale a dire che non c'è nessuna passione che non conduca al peccato; dunque il πάθος è l'esatto contrario dell'assenza di passioni, ἡ ἀπάθεια;¹³ l'altro in un senso più particolare, per cui la

6 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 33,10–11; tr. Bonato 40). Nel corso dell'articolo, le traduzioni dalle *Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici* di Gregorio di Nissa sono tratte dal volume a cura di V. Bonato, Bologna 1995.

7 Gn 3,21. Cf. *Cant* II (GNO VI 60,18).

8 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 100,16–21).

9 Cf. J. Daniélou, *Platonisme*, 99–110.

10 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 29,20–30,5). Per la trattazione nissena a proposito delle passioni e della lotta efficace contro di esse cf. W. Völker, *Gregorio di Nissa*, 111–115; 228–232.

11 Cf. *Cant* X (GNO VI 313,1–16). Il passo è un ottimo *pendant* a Platone, *Fedone* 65c–67d.

12 Cf. *Cant* X (GNO VI 313,17–314,10).

13 Sull'ἀπάθεια cf. J. Daniélou, *Platonisme*, 92–103; J.W. Smith, *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa*, New York 2004.

passione è un desiderio che serve a raggiungere Dio;¹⁴ anzi egli è convinto che è grazie al desiderio che noi siamo condotti verso Dio.¹⁵

L'interpretazione spirituale del *Cantico* porta a una trasfigurazione della passionalità, capace di ammirare la purezza in quelle realtà stesse che sembrano indecorose, cogliendo un significato esente dal male in discorsi intrisi di passionalità.¹⁶ Nella lotta per rimodellare la passionalità, il cristiano non sperimenta soltanto il “fuoco” dell'*eros*, ma anche il calore di quella fiamma che il Signore ha portato dal cielo sulla terra:

Da qui impariamo come sia necessario che l'anima, rimanendo intenta alla bellezza inaccessibile della natura divina (πρὸς τὸ ἀπρόσιτον τῆς θείας φύσεως κάλλος ἐνατενίζουσιν), venga presa dall'amore (ἐρᾶν) per essa, almeno quanto il corpo si affeziona a ciò che gli è congenere e affine. Trasformata la sua brama in impassibilità (μετενεγκοῦσαν εἰς ἀπάθειαν τὸ πάθος) ed eliminato ogni affetto materiale, l'anima dovrà ardere di passione (ζέειν ἐρωτικῶς) soltanto per lo spirito, bruciando di quel fuoco (διὰ τοῦ πυρὸς ἐκείνου θερμαινομένην) che il Signore venne a portare sopra la terra.¹⁷

Gregorio propone di vivere l'ideale cristiano della sintesi, dell'unione tra spirito e materia. L'impassibilità non è annullamento totale della passionalità, ma il raggiungimento della libertà, grazie all'autodominio, nella insuperabilità della tensione e della lotta. Origene aveva descritto il pieno fervore nel suo commento al *Cantico*, il rapporto dell'anima con Cristo, la tensione tra *iubilis* e *siccitas*, la ferita dell'amore, il desiderio di una nuova comunione, lo *spiritualis amplexus*.¹⁸ Pur tenendo a modello il Maestro di Alessandria, Gregorio si discosta, in parte, per ciò che concerne la concezione dell'*eros*. Il Nisseno cerca di chiarire il termine platonico in senso cristiano e di eliminare ogni interpretazione errata, specificando che si tratta di un amore privo di passione e beato, tanto da porre la sua attenzione sull'*agape* di Cristo. L'*eros* completamente spiritualizzato è possibile solo allorquando la grazia si è impadronita dell'anima ed ha consumato tutto ciò che è terreno¹⁹. Come ha notato Daniélou,

14 Cf. W. Völker, *Gregorio di Nissa*, 111.

15 Cf. *Cant* V (GNO VI 160,15–161,7). Nell'omelia VI si distingue l'amore appassionato di Dio (ἔρως) dal perfido amore carnale (ἡ σωματικὴ ἐπιθυμία): è l'amore avente Dio per oggetto (τὸν θεῖον ἔρωτα) ad essere l'opposto del desiderio carnale; cf. *Cant* VI (GNO VI 191,7–192,4).

16 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 29,7–12).

17 *Cant* I (GNO VI 27,8–15; tr. Bonato 37).

18 Cf. W. Völker, *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes*, Tübingen 1931, 104 ss.

19 Cf. W. Völker, *Gregorio di Nissa*, 196–197; E. von Ivanka, *Platonismo cristiano. Recezione e tra-*

l'*eros* nella concezione del Nisseno appare come amore nella forma più intensa, come l'ardore della carità, giacché, per conoscere l'Incomprensibile, bisogna seguirlo proponendosi l'obbedienza al suo volere, perché il mistero divino si rende accessibile nella fede.²⁰ Gregorio trasporta l'amore dal campo terreno a quello puramente spirituale, e rende il suo pensiero ancora più chiaro con l'aggiunta dell'aggettivo "divino".²¹ Dopo aver trasformato la brama in impassibilità (μετενεγκοῦσαν εἰς ἀπάθειαν τὸ πάθος), le anime maturate interiormente sono colte dall'amore ardente per il Signore, corrono dietro al suo profumo e per mezzo dell'*agape* attirano a sé la bellezza dello sposo e vengono da lui ricompensate con il desiderio, ossia la pienezza dei beni spirituali.²²

Chi ha raggiunto attraverso un cammino mistico questa possibilità è uomo e non lo è più, giacché la perfezione adesso è Cristo che prende forma nell'anima umana.²³ L'esperienza mistica anticipa già in terra quella condizione di immaterialità che si avrà dopo la morte, allorquando nell'ottica del Nisseno saremo "come gli angeli".²⁴ Il Verbo, conducendo l'anima purificata alla scoperta del senso spirituale, le offre la prova che non è più un uomo, né ha una vita partecipe della carne e del sangue, ma che è pronta ad ottenere la resurrezione dei credenti "divenuta uguale agli angeli ora che ha conseguito la libertà dalle passioni" (ἰσάγγελος διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας γενόμενος).²⁵ Più volte Gregorio prospetta la possibilità di una deificazione dell'uomo, vista come il traguardo naturale dell'impegno ascetico, ma la divinizzazione richiede il possesso, o meglio, la presenza di quell'amore introdotto dal Verbo.

sformazione del platonismo nella patristica, Milano 1992, 115–142; M. Canévet, "La nozione di desiderio nelle Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa", in: C.A. Bernard (ed.), *L'antropologia dei maestri spirituali. Simposio organizzato dall'Istituto di Spiritualità dell'Università Gregoriana*, Milano 1991, 77–94, spec. 82–84.

20 Cf. J. Daniélou, "Mystique de la ténèbre chez Grégoire de Nysse", in: M. Viller, S.J. – F. Cavallera – J. de Guibert (eds.), *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Ascétique et Mystique*, Vol. 2, Paris 1953, coll. 1872–1885.

21 Cf. *Inst* (GNO VIII/1 40,10; 41,11); *Macr* 22 (GNO VIII/1 396; SC 178 214).

22 Cf. *Cant* 1 (GNO VI 27,8–15). Gregorio spiega che il desiderio aumenta in grandezza, cioè in capacità di accogliere Dio; a volte chiarisce che questo desiderio cresce in intensità, ossia che l'unione dell'anima a Cristo è più forte perché il legame del suo desiderio per lui è più teso. Cf. M. Canévet, "La nozione di desiderio", 90–91.

23 La mistica di Cristo non è per Gregorio uno stadio di passaggio: cf. A. Lieske, "Zur Theologie der Christusbewusstseins Gregors von Nyssa", *Scholastik* 14 (1939) 495–514, spec. 514; J. Daniélou, *Grégoire de Nysse. Contemplation sur la vie de Moïse*, Paris 1942 (SC 1), 148 n. 1; Id., *Platonisme*, 306.

24 Cf. Lk 20,36.

25 *Cant* 1 (GNO VI 30,7–8).

È ben noto come il linguaggio del Nisseno si tinga spesso di valenze simboliche. Vale la pena soffermarsi su un'immagine che anima le pagine della quarta omelia: la freccia, la ferita d'amore. Qui l'anima è allo stesso tempo “sposa”, in quanto partecipa dei doni celesti, e “freccia” in quanto viene diretta verso lo scopo buono. Essa si caratterizza pertanto attraverso due espressioni: “sì da essere messa in movimento per effetto del colpo”, e “prendere riposo nelle braccia dell'arciere”.²⁶ Quietude e movimento vanno di pari passo. L'ardente desiderio, che spinge ad andare avanti, e la pace nel Signore, il sentimento del possesso che rende appagati, non possono essere separati l'uno dall'altro.²⁷ L'anima elevata nell'ascesa spirituale avverte in sé la ferita d'amore con la quale è stata colpita e può esclamare: “Ferita d'amore io sono!”.²⁸ Nel prosieguo dell'opera, la sposa, avvolta dall'amore del Verbo, si trova nelle braccia del suo Arciere, porta in sé Dio:

Allora la sposa presa da un amore riconoscente per colui che l'ama (ἀντερασθείσα ἡ νύμφη τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος), mostra nel suo corpo la freccia dell'amore (τῆς ἀγάπης τὸ βέλος) piantata in profondità come una prova della sua partecipazione alla natura divina (τὴν τῆς θεότητος αὐτοῦ κοινωνίαν). Infatti Dio è amore (ἀγάπη), come è stato detto, amore che penetra nel cuore con la freccia della fede. Se poi bisogna precisare quale sia il nome di questa freccia, allora faccio riferimento a quello che ho appreso da Paolo: la freccia è la fede che opera mediante la carità (πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη).²⁹

Bisogna notare la ricercata predilezione per verbi o termini afferenti all'amore: ἀντερασθείσα / ἀγαπήσαντος / ἀγάπης; nel modo più conciso si afferma con Paolo che la forza motrice è l'ἀγάπη.³⁰ In questa prospettiva, essendo l'amore il dono per eccellenza dell'amore divino, manifestatosi in Cristo, è solo l'amore agapico che permette alla sposa di accostarsi al volto di Dio.³¹ Rahner ha descritto molto bene questo atteggiamento: “Avere Cristo vivente nel proprio interno, questo è

26 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 129,15–16).

27 Cf. W. Völker, *Gregorio di Nissa*, 171–172; G.F. Garel, *Gregorio di Nissa, L'esperienza mistica, il simbolismo, il progresso spirituale*, Torino 2004, 89–90.

28 Ct 2.5.

29 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 378,14–21; tr. Bonato 2008).

30 Si veda l'analisi condotta da M. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith. Union, Knowledge and Divine Presence*, Oxford 2004, 91–98.

31 Per il concetto e la terminologia dell'amore in Gregorio cf. G. Maspero, “Love”, in: L.F. Matteo-Seco – G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden-Boston 2010, 457–463.

ora per Gregorio il grande tema mistico della sua profonda dottrina della religiosità".³² Ecco il coronamento dell'unione mistico-sponsale, una κοινωνία τῆς θεότητος, dove ὁ θεός è ἀγάπη.

2 Macrina: tra consacrazione verginale e dimensione sponsale

Quale è stato il percorso mistico di Macrina? La *Vita di Macrina* offre un'immagine precisa della sua protagonista: il suo è in primo luogo un cammino di liberazione dalle passioni, è una vita votata alla contemplazione, è infine amore mistico. Il suo percorso va articolandosi progressivamente: dalla vita del mondo (βίος κοσμικός), tramite la scelta di una vita filosofica,³³ Macrina approda alla vita angelica (βίος ἀγγελικός). La sua storia rispecchia una concezione dinamica della virtù, articolata in fasi, ognuna delle quali costituisce un superamento della precedente.³⁴ Liberazione dalle passioni umane: Macrina ne dà prova nei dolori che si susseguono; in primo luogo la morte del fratello Naucazio, quando, malgrado i propri sentimenti, ella resta padrona di se stessa e, opponendo vittoriosamente la ragione al sentimento, assume un atteggiamento "filosofico". È lo stesso Gregorio a fornirci la giusta chiave di lettura. La disperazione materna di Emmelia, del tutto umana, si riequilibra nell'atteggiamento stoicamente cristiano della figlia, che si eleva al di sopra degli affetti naturali ed educa la madre alla pazienza, all'ἀνδρεία.³⁵ L'iter prosegue: si verificano in seguito la morte della madre e quella del fratello Basilio, che ella sopporta con disarmante fermezza facendone il punto di partenza per una "più

32 H. Rahner, "Die Gottesgeburt. Die Lehre der Kirchenväter von der Geburt Christi im Herzen der Gläubigen", *ZKTh* 59 (1935) 333–418, spec. 374.

33 La *Vita di Macrina* è stata avvicinata ad altri testi biografici filosofici: cf. A. Meredith, "A Comparison between the *Vita Sanctae Macrinae* of Gregory of Nyssa, the *Vita Plotini* of Porphyry and the *De Vita Pythagorica* of Iamblichus", in: A. Spira (ed.), *The Biographical Works of Gregory of Nyssa. Proceedings of the Fifth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, Cambridge (Ma) 1984, 181–195; Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 103.

34 Cf. Giannarelli, *S. Gregorio di Nissa, La vita di S. Macrina*, 36–38; Ead., "La donna e la santità: la 'Vita di Santa Macrina' di Gregorio di Nissa", *RAMi* 17 (1992) 397–427.

35 Cf. *Macr* 9 (GNO VIII/1 379–380; SC 178, 168–172). Se ricordiamo quanto detto in precedenza sulla necessità del dominio del logos sulle passioni, ci rendiamo conto che la futura santa ha già compiuto la sua trasformazione nell'opposto: è una γυνή ἀνδρεία. Cf. S. Elm, *Virgins of God. The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 1994, 100–102; E. Giannarelli, *La tipologia femminile nella biografia e nell'autobiografia cristiana del IV secolo*, Roma 1980, 13–25; K. Vogt, "Becoming male': a Gnostic and Early Christian Metaphor", in: K.E. Børresen (ed.), *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, Oslo 1991, 172–187.

alta filosofia”.³⁶ L'anima della donna viene saggiata come l'oro nel crogiuolo, scrive Gregorio utilizzando un'immagine eloquente:³⁷

L'esame dell'oro, così si dice, avviene in differenti crogiuoli (τὴν τοῦ χρυσοῦ φασι δοκιμασίαν ἐν διαφόροις γίνεσθαι χωνευτηρίοις) perché, se qualche impurità sfugge alla prima fusione, sia separata nella seconda, e ancora nell'ultima tutto ciò che di estraneo è mescolato al metallo venga purificato; l'esame dell'oro puro dev'essere il più accurato possibile per vedere se, dopo essere passato attraverso ogni crogiuolo, non emetta più alcuna impurità (εἰ διὰ πάσης διεξελθὼν χοάνης μηδένα ῥύπον ἀποποιήσῃ).³⁸

È la stessa immagine con cui si apre l'omelia IV del *Cantico*: gli orafi esperti nella raffinazione dell'oro sono capaci di rimediare all'offuscamento del colore ricorrendo al fuoco del crogiuolo; allo stesso modo Dio cerca di purificare l'anima, rendendole il suo splendore come se l'avesse purificata nel crogiuolo (καθάπερ τινὶ χώνῃ τὴν ψυχὴν λαμπρύνας).³⁹ Il *topos* della purificazione dell'oro o dell'argento, diffuso nell'Antico Testamento, è usato come termine di paragone per suggerire il carattere severo dell'esame della purezza dell'anima umana, nonché come metafora per esprimere l'idea di quanto avviene con i giusti messi alla prova come il crogiuolo che purga l'oro e ne prova la qualità.⁴⁰ Sono infatti gli avvenimenti negativi a saggiare la virtù di Macrina. Ma l'evoluzione della donna continua: il passo successivo è vivere, sia pur nel corpo, in una maniera tutta spirituale, conquistando attraverso il distacco dai valori terreni e tramite una rigorosa ascesi una natura superiore all'uomo. È ciò che Macrina raggiunge secondo Gregorio, conducendo una vita nella carne, senza lasciarsi condizionare da questa, leggendo tutti gli avvenimenti dell'esistenza, anche quelli tristi, alla luce di Dio. Arriviamo così all'ultima tappa: la vita angelica. Negli ultimi istanti della sua vita, Macrina viene apertamente paragonata a un angelo, al punto da aver superato la comune natura umana tanto da “non provare [...]

36 Cf. *Macr* 13–14 (GNO VIII/1 384–386; SC 178 184–190); *Macr* 17 (GNO VIII/1 390; SC 178 198).

37 Sull'immagine cf. A. Cataldo, “Come l'oro nel crogiuolo (Greg. Naz. Ep. 214 e Sap 3.5–6)”, *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Lettere Classiche di Lecce* 2 (1983) 19–27.

38 *Macr* 14 (GNO VIII/1 386; SC 178 188–190; tr. Giannarelli 109). La stessa immagine dell'oro nel crogiuolo compare nel dialogo *Sull'anima e la resurrezione* in merito alla purificazione dalle passioni, cf. *An et res* (GNO III/3 72,18–74,2). Nel corso dell'articolo, le traduzioni della *Vita di Macrina* sono tratte dal volume a cura di E. Giannarelli, Milano 1988.

39 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 100,5–13; 101,4–13).

40 Job 23.10; Pr 17.3; Wis 3.6; Is 48.10; Ez 22.20–22; Mal 3.3.

nessun sentimento di estraneità rispetto alla prospettiva della morte":⁴¹ all'idea dell'ἀπάθεια si accompagna quella dell'accostamento alla vita futura.

Vita "angelica", ma anche "celeste", "immateriale", "leggera" e "superiore", sono tutti aggettivi che nella *Vita di Macrina* vogliono esprimere, attraverso un linguaggio platonico, la perfetta liberazione della donna dalla realtà sensibile, dal *saeculum* e allo stesso tempo l'accesso alla contemplazione delle realtà superiori, incorporee e intelligibili.⁴² Gregorio rende bene il concetto, quando al momento della morte sostiene che Macrina è al confine fra la natura umana e quella incorporea: ai confini perché ella vive nella carne, sebbene libera dalle passioni, e dunque ancora partecipe della natura corporea, ma anche al di là di quest'ultima, perché ella non è più attratta dal *saeculum* e dai problemi della carne.⁴³ È verso la natura incorporea che tende ad andare: Macrina, simile agli angeli per la contemplazione (οἷον ἀγγέλου τινὸς οἰκονομικῶς ἀνθρωπίνην ὑπελθόντος μορφήν), entra a far parte della schiera angelica, camminando nell'imperurbabilità (ἐν ἀπαθείᾳ) nelle altezze con le potenze celesti.⁴⁴ Le esperienze vissute sono state essenziali per Macrina allo scopo di giungere all'incontro finale con Cristo: l'ascesi filosofica conduce all'ascesi mistica. È infatti nella descrizione della sua morte che si manifesta il suo divino e puro amore per lo sposo invisibile. È allora che l'ascesi filosofica si concretizza in un volto: il volto di colui che è amato dalla vergine. Cristo è lo sposo, Macrina la sposa, secondo la riutilizzazione ormai consueta del *Cantico*, posto che la morte segni per lei la realizzazione delle nozze mistiche con Cristo:

A me sembrava che manifestasse a tutti i presenti quel divino e puro amore (τὸν θεῖον ἐκεῖνον καὶ καθαρὸν ἔρωτα) dello sposo invisibile, che ella teneva nascosto, nutrendolo nel segreto della sua anima, e che rendesse pubblica la disposizione del suo cuore di affrettarsi verso l'amato (πρὸς τὸν ποθοῦμενον), per essere al più presto con lui, liberata dai legami col corpo (τῶν δεσμῶν ἐκλυθεῖσα τοῦ σώματος).⁴⁵

Tutto scaturisce da quel θεῖος καὶ καθαρὸς ἔρως, più volte al centro delle *Omèlie sul Cantico*. Ma vi è dell'altro. Nelle omèlie sul *Cantico*, la sposa risveglia

41 *Macr* 22 (GNO VIII/1 396; SC 178 214).

42 Per una serie di passi utili al riguardo cf. Maraval (éd.), *Saint Grégoire de Nysse*, 96.

43 Cf. Maraval (éd.), *Saint Grégoire de Nysse*, 95–98; Giannarelli, *S. Gregorio di Nissa, La vita di S. Macrina*, 40–41. Sullo stato angelico cf. K.S. Frank, *Angelikos Bios. Begriffsanalytische und Begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum "engelgleichen Leben" im frühen Mönchtum*, Münster 1964.

44 Cf. *Macr* 22 (GNO VIII/1 395–396; SC 178 214).

45 *Macr* 22 (GNO VIII/1 396; SC 178 214; tr. Giannarelli 125).

l'amore delle figlie di Gerusalemme con la descrizione che fa loro dello Sposo: “Come descrive loro (ὕπογράφει) colui che esse cercano? Come dipinge (ζωγράφει) i tratti di colui che esse desiderano?”⁴⁶ Macrina lo svela anch'essa a tutti i presenti: liberare la propria carne dalla paura e dal dolore, purificare l'anima, intraprendere l'ascesa mistica all'insegna di quell'eros puro e divino, che conduce davanti al volto agapico di Dio e che permette di accoglierlo nella purezza. Da notare la fretta di Macrina di andare verso l'amato:

Il suo desiderio (ἡ προθυμία) non si affievoliva, ma quanto più si avvicinava alla dipartita, tanto più, contemplando la bellezza dello sposo, in una fretta impetuosa andava verso l'amato (ἐν σφοδροτέρῃ τῇ ἐπείξει πρὸς τὸν ποθοῦμενον ἔστο) e indirizzava queste parole non più a noi che eravamo presenti, ma a colui verso cui teneva fissi (ἀτενές) i suoi occhi.⁴⁷

È quello stesso slancio, quel δρόμος, quel πόθος πρὸς τὸν ποθοῦμενον che caratterizza l'esperienza mistica della sposa nelle omelie del *Cantico*.⁴⁸ Il lessico, così come il repertorio di immagini, è pressoché analogo a quanto visto in precedenza nelle omelie dove, dopo aver trasformato il πάθος in ἀπάθεια, l'anima deve tenere lo sguardo fisso (ἐνατενίζουσιν) sulla bellezza divina e ardere di amore.⁴⁹ Si tratta di quello sguardo ἀτενές capace di rendere simili a ciò che si contempla con attenzione: “uno, infatti, riceve in sé la somiglianza (τὸ ὁμοίωμα) di ciò nel quale fissa il suo sguardo (ἐνατενίστη)”.⁵⁰ Ecco il cuore dell'amore tra lo sposo e la sposa: Macrina vuole affrettare la sua unione totale con Cristo nelle

46 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 380,13–14).

47 *Macr* 23 (GNO VIII/1 396; SC 178 216; tr. Giannarelli 125). Sulle immagini di ascendenza paolina della corsa, della vittoria cf. Giannarelli, S. *Gregorio di Nissa, La vita di S. Macrina*, 47–48. Si vedano anche M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nyse et l'herméneutique biblique*, Paris 1983, 221 ss.; J. Leemans, “God and Christ as Agonothetae in the Writings of Gregory of Nyssa”, *SE* 43 (2004) 5–31; A. Capone, “Challenging the Heretic: The Preface of Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium* 111”, in: J. Leemans – M. Cassin (edd.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium 111. An English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, Leuven, 14–17 September 2010, Leiden-Boston 2014, 512–527.

48 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 39,14–15; 40,7–8); *Cant* IV (GNO VI 105,16–17).

49 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 27,9–12).

50 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 105,16–17). Cf. J. Daniélou, *L'Essere e il Tempo in Gregorio di Nissa*, Roma 1991, 187–214. Gregorio ama termini quali ἀτενίζειν, ἐνατενίζειν o ἀτενῶς per descrivere lo sguardo di colui che contempla immerso in Dio, libero dalle passioni. Si veda anche *An et res* (GNO III/3 66,4–67,8). Cf. anche J. Daniélou, “La θεωρία chez Grégoire de Nyse”, *Studia Patristica* 11 (1972) 130–145.

nozze mistiche con lui;⁵¹ al pari della sposa nelle omelie del *Cantico*, ella non si dirige soltanto verso colui che desidera (τὸν ποθοῦμενον), ma verso colui che l'ama (ἐραστής).⁵² Estrema dimostrazione di un completo distacco dei valori terreni è appunto la fretta di morire, la tensione verso l'amato, lo sguardo fisso su di lui e sulla sua bellezza, la corsa verso quella realtà invisibile che è stata presente in tutta la sua vita: un repertorio di immagini adottato anche per la sposa nelle *Omelie sul Cantico*.

Vale la pena ricordare come la decisione di Macrina di dedicarsi a vita ascetica viene giustificata con la ferma intenzione di rimanere fedele al fidanzato assente, non defunto, ma ormai uno sposo lontano. Alla figura di questo "marito" terreno mai dimenticato si sovrappone quella di Cristo, con il quale si celebrano le nozze celesti: sebbene il punto di passaggio non sia del tutto chiaro, la sostituzione è inequivocabile.⁵³ Non a caso, alla morte di Macrina la diaconessa della comunità monastica è del parere che la futura santa non compaia agli occhi delle vergini vestita νυμφικῶς, "come una novella sposa".⁵⁴ L'avverbio greco sta ad indicare che l'abbigliamento della vergine è quello di una fidanzata che va a sposarsi: le nozze mistiche sono avvenute, ella è ormai la sposa del suo νυμφίος, il Signore. Se nella vita di Macrina è stato a lungo sottolineato il valore della verginità, un altro aspetto, finora rimasto in ombra, è la prospettiva della sponsalità, che paradossalmente – ma il paradosso è utilizzato dal Nisseno in ambito teologico-spirituale – si realizza proprio attraverso la scelta della verginità. La vergine che dona il suo cuore a Cristo rinuncia a uno sposo umano per prendere il Signore come sposo. Se nel matrimonio vi è l'attuazione delle nozze di Cristo e della Chiesa, come si legge in Paolo,⁵⁵ nella verginità questa attuazione è più totale, perché solo Cristo diventa lo Sposo, senza la mediazione di uno sposo umano. La consacrazione verginale di Macrina conferisce a questa relazione sponsale tutto il suo valore.

La morte di Macrina si chiude con una preghiera sul letto di morte. Quello che potrebbe sembrare un *collage* di brani scritturistici è in realtà un'opera di esegesi.⁵⁶ Dopo aver menzionato il valore salvifico apportato da Cristo, Macrina

51 Cf. E. Moutsoulas, "La 'sainteté' dans les œuvres biographiques de Grégoire de Nysse", in: Spira (ed.), *The Biographical Works*, 221–240; Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 107.

52 Cf. R. Leys, *L'image de Dieu chez saint Grégoire de Nysse. Esquisse d'une doctrine*, Paris 1951, 52.

53 Cf. *Macr* 5 (GNO VIII/1 375; SC 178, 156). Cf. A. Momigliano, "Macrina: una santa aristocratica vista dal fratello", in: G. Arrigoni (ed.), *Le donne in Grecia*, Milano 1983, 331–334, spec. 337–339.

54 Cf. *Macr* 32 (GNO VIII/1 406; SC 178 246).

55 Eph 5,28.

56 Cf. *Macr* 24 (GNO VIII/1 397–398; SC 178 218–224); cf. J.T. Cummings, "The Holy Deathbed.

ricorda come ella si sia “slanciata verso di lui, fin dal seno di sua madre, che la sua anima amò con tutta la sua forza”.⁵⁷ Il richiamo al lessico caratteristico di Ct 1.7 segna la sua identificazione di sposa, mossa dal desiderio ardente di abbracciare l'amato Sposo del *Cantico*. Ma l'afflato mistico di Macrina non è finito, raggiunge il suo culmine allorché ella dichiara:

Anche di me ricordati nel tuo regno, perché anch'io sono stata crocifissa insieme a te (καὶ γὰρ σοὶ συνεσταυρώθην), io che ho inchiodato le mie carni per rispetto religioso di te (καθηλώσασα ἐκ τοῦ φόβου σου τὰς σάρκας μου).⁵⁸

Macrina ha crocifisso le proprie passioni, per crocifiggersi con Cristo: si tratta di una doppia crocifissione che porta al rifiuto dei desideri della carne, del mondo, in modo da aspirare al divino. Nel *Cantico*, secondo Gregorio, l'anima si leva per aprire al suo diletto, ma per fare questo, per fare entrare a sé lo sposo, deve prima mortificare, per un suo atto di spontanea volontà, le proprie membra corporee. Questo è il significato delle parole di Ct 5,5: “Le mie dita stillavano mirra fluente”. Tutte le membra devono essere morte alle passioni.⁵⁹ Gli ultimi istanti della vita di Macrina esplicitano il senso cristiano del suo *iter*: liberarsi dalle passioni della carne per essere crocifissi con Cristo. Quel dardo, causa di quella ferita d'amore che colpisce la sposa del *Cantico*, è penetrato nell'anima di Macrina; a partire dallo sguardo verso il Crocifisso ella avverte che bisogna superare la sensibilità umana e che non è possibile intraprendere questo cammino al seguito del Cristo-sposo senza un effettivo distacco dalle realtà materiali: Cristo chiede una spoliatura totale di sé a coloro che ama, perché solo così potrà riempirli di “quel divino e puro amore”. Cristo accresce la bellezza nella sua amata per mezzo del suo amore: “Prima mi ha fatto amabile (ἐρασμίαν) e così mi ha amato (ἡγάπησεν)”.⁶⁰ Diventare simili a colui che è veramente bello, vuol dire raggiungere uno stato di beatitudine, impassibilità ed essere vicini a Dio. Non è forse stato il proposito di Macrina?

Nell'esperienza mistica convivono due realtà, che assumono entrambe un ruolo primario: la parte divina e quella umana, ossia il momento teologico

Saint and Penitent. Variation of a Theme”, in: Spira (ed.), *The Biographical Works*, 241–263; E. Giannarelli, “La morte di Macrina”, in: *La morte e il morire*, Bologna 1995, 305–330. Sui rimandi biblici cf. E. Marotta, “La base biblica della *Vita s. Macrinae* di Gregorio di Nissa”, *VetChr* 5 (1968) 73–88.

57 *Macr* 24 (GNO VIII/1 397; SC 178 220).

58 *Macr* 24 (GNO VIII/1 398; SC 178 222; tr. Giannarelli 128). I riferimenti scritturistici sono Gal 2.19 e Ps 118.120.

59 *Cant* XII (GNO VI 342,9–343,1).

60 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 46,16–17).

e quello psicologico-umano. Sebbene l'azione di Dio sia l'elemento portante sul quale poggia tutta la realtà mistica, è comunque necessario considerare non soltanto ciò che Dio impone all'uomo dall'alto, ma anche come il soggetto, a sua volta, sia in grado di reagire al volere divino, teso ad assorbire tutto l'individuo, fino a renderlo strumento attivo della sua azione. Ogni grado di conoscenza umana coinvolge una dimensione mistica e ogni condizione mistica coinvolge una conoscenza umana; come si legge nella sesta omelia del *Cantico* "le due realtà passano l'una nell'altra, Dio si fa anima e, viceversa, l'anima si trasferisce in Dio".⁶¹ Nella descrizione della morte di Macrina si capisce che ella non annulla se stessa e la sua umanità quando arriva a Cristo, ma diventa veramente *capax Dei*; al pari della sposa del *Cantico*, la sua anima è stata colta dall'impulso appassionato di avvicinarsi a Dio e non ha mai cessato di protendersi verso colui che è stato sempre davanti a lei: il Cristo sposo.

La dimensione sponsale dell'amore virginal è in ultima istanza amore per Dio e questo puro e divino amore, contemplato nella sua bellezza, genera bellezza: questa è la chiave dell'ἐπέκτασις. Se il messaggio profondo delle *Omellerie sul Cantico* di Gregorio risiede nell'unione tra l'umano e il divino,⁶² Macrina grazie alla sua verginità sponsale ha ugualmente raggiunto la κοινωνία con Dio: è sposa di Cristo.

Nel corso della sua vita Macrina ha rivestito il ruolo di maestra spirituale, educata da Dio (θεοδιδάκτῃ): per i suoi fratelli, per sua madre diventando "madre di sua madre",⁶³ per le sue consorelle che alla morte la piangono come nutrice e madre. Ella potrebbe fungere da *exemplum* per coloro che "mantengono la loro fontana sigillata",⁶⁴ cioè quelli le cui capacità intellettuali rimangono elevate, rivolte verso l'alto, vale a dire senza essere sprecate nel disquisire su pensieri mondani o realtà corporee. Nel *Cantico*, secondo Gregorio, si legge che l'anima, resa perfetta, invita, in nome delle potenze angeliche, le altre anime a volgere sempre lo sguardo a quelle potenze, cioè alla vita angelica che esse dovranno proporsi come fine già sulla terra, imitandola διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας.⁶⁵ È lo stesso proposito che anima la comunità creata da Macrina ad Annesi, dove queste vergini, lontane da ogni vanità mondana, scandiscono il loro modo di

61 *Cant* VI (GNO VI 179,6–7).

62 Cf. A. Cortesi, *Le Omellerie sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa: Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale*, Roma 2000, 87.

63 Cf. *Macr* 10 (GNO VIII/1 380; SC 178 172); E. Giannarelli, "Macrina e sua madre: santità e paradosso", *StPatr* 20 (1989) 224–230.

64 Ct 4.12.

65 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 134,17–19–135,1–6).

vivere a imitazione degli angeli: “A somiglianza delle potenze incorporee non erano appesantite dal bagaglio del corpo, ma la loro vita era tesa verso l'alto ed elevata, e si dirigeva verso il cielo (συμμετεωροπορούσα) insieme alle potenze celesti”.⁶⁶ La comunità fondata da Macrina, oltre che incentrata sul lavoro, sulla preghiera, è votata al βίος ἀγγελικός e all'ἀπάθεια, un ideale che sarà ripreso nel dialogo *Sull'anima e la resurrezione*, dove Macrina appare nella veste di maestra, o meglio di μυσταγωγός femminile.⁶⁷ Qui, come nelle omelie sul *Cantico*, la κάθαρσις dell'anima dalle passioni è il presupposto dell'assimilazione a Dio; qui si spiega come i moti dell'anima nell'altra vita saranno inutili e rimarrà soltanto l'amore per Dio, un'ἀγάπη che, se particolarmente intensa, può definirsi ἔρως.⁶⁸ L'ἀπάθεια non esclude l'ἀγάπη, che rimarrà anche quando l'uomo si sarà perfezionato e liberato da tutte le passioni. Macrina e la sposa del *Cantico* ne sono modelli esemplari.

Bibliografia

- Bonato, V. *Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa*, Bologna 1995.
- Canévet, M. *Grégoire de Nysses et l'herméneutique biblique*, Paris 1983.
- Canévet, M. “La nozione di desiderio nelle Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa”, in: C.A. Bernard (ed.), *L'antropologia dei maestri spirituali. Simposio organizzato dall'Istituto di Spiritualità dell'Università Gregoriana*, Milano 1991, 77–94.
- Capone, A. “Challenging the Heretic: The Preface of Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium* III”, in: J. Leemans – M. Cassin (edd.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium III. An English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, Leuven, 14–17 September 2010, Leiden-Boston 2014, 512–527.
- Cataldo, A. “Come l'oro nel crogiuolo (Greg. Naz. Ep. 214 e Sap 3,5–6)”, *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Lettere Classiche di Lecce* 2 (1983) 19–27.
- Cortesi, A. *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa: Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale*, Roma 2000.
- Cummings, J.T. “The Holy Deathbed. Saint and Penitent. Variation of a Theme”, in:

66 *Macr* 11 (GNO VIII/1 383; SC 178 180; tr. Giannarelli 103). Si può notare un verbo importante quale συμμετεωροπορέω, unito a un'immagine ricca di misticismo, cf. Maraval (ed.), *Grégoire de Nysses*, 97.

67 Cf. H.M. Meissner, *Rhetorik und Theologie: der Dialog Gregors von Nyssa De anima et resurrectione*, Frankfurt am Main 1991, 23–33; 34–42; 382–384.

68 Cf. *An et res* (GNO III/3 65,9–72,18); I. Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa, Sull'anima e la resurrezione*, Milano 2007, 21–22; 112–125; 146–192.

- A. Spira (ed.), *The Biographical Works of Gregory of Nyssa. Proceedings of the Fifth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, Cambridge (Ma) 1984, 241–263.
- Daniélou, J. *Grégoire de Nysse. Contemplation sur la vie de Moïse* (SC 1), Paris 1942.
- Daniélou, J. *Platonisme et Théologie mystique*, Paris 1944.
- Daniélou, J. "Mystique de la ténèbre chez Grégoire de Nysse", in: M. Viller, s.J. – F. Cavalera – J. de Guibert (eds.), *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Ascétique et Mystique*, Vol. 2, Paris 1953, coll. 1872–1885.
- Daniélou, J. "La θεωρία chez Grégoire de Nysse", *Studia Patristica* 11 (1972) 130–145.
- Daniélou, J. *L'Essere e il Tempo in Gregorio di Nissa*, Roma 1991.
- Elm, S. *Virgins of God. The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 1994.
- Frank, K.S. *Angelikos Bios. Begriffsanalytische und Begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum "engelgleichen Leben" im frühen Mönchtum*, Münster 1964.
- Garel, G.F. *Gregorio di Nissa, L'esperienza mistica, il simbolismo, il progresso spirituale*, Torino 2004.
- Gargano, I.G. *La teoria di Gregorio di Nissa sul Cantico dei Cantici. Indagine su alcune indicazioni di metodo esegetico*, Roma 1981.
- Giannarelli, E. *La tipologia femminile nella biografia e nell'autobiografia cristiana del IV secolo*, Roma 1980.
- Giannarelli, E. S. *Gregorio di Nissa, La vita di S. Macrina*, Milano 1988.
- Giannarelli, E. "Macrina e sua madre: santità e paradosso", *StPatr* 20 (1989) 224–230.
- Giannarelli, E. "La donna e la santità: la 'Vita di Santa Macrina' di Gregorio di Nissa", *RAMi* 17 (1992) 397–427.
- Giannarelli, E. "La morte di Macrina", in: *La morte e il morire*, Bologna 1995, 305–330.
- Ivánka, E. von *Platonismo cristiano. Recezione e trasformazione del platonismo nella patristica*, Milano 1992.
- Laird, M. *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith. Union, Knowledge and Divine Presence*, Oxford 2004.
- Leemans, J. "God and Christ as Agonothetae in the Writings of Gregory of Nyssa", *SE* 43 (2004) 5–31.
- Leys, R. *L'image de Dieu chez saint Grégoire de Nysse. Esquisse d'une doctrine*, Paris 1951.
- Lieske, A. "Zur Theologie der Christumystik Gregors von Nyssa", *Scholastik* 14 (1939) 495–514.
- Maraval, P. *Saint Grégoire de Nysse, La vie de Sainte Macrine* (SC 178), Paris 1971.
- Marotta, E. "La base biblica della *Vita s. Macrinae* di Gregorio di Nissa", *VetChr* 5 (1968) 73–88.
- Maspero, G. "Love", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco – G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden-Boston 2010, 457–463.
- Meissner, H.M. *Rhetorik und Theologie: der Dialog Gregors von Nyssa De anima et resurrectione*, Frankfurt am Main 1991.
- Meredith, A. "A Comparison between the *Vita Sanctae Macrinae* of Gregory of Nyssa,

- the *Vita Plotini* of Porphyry and the *De Vita Pythagorica* of Iamblichus", in: A. Spira (ed.), *The Biographical Works of Gregory of Nyssa. Proceedings of the Fifth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, Cambridge (Ma) 1984, 181–195.
- Momigliano, A. "Macrina: una santa aristocratica vista dal fratello", in: G. Arrigoni (ed.), *Le donne in Grecia*, Milano 1983, 331–334.
- Moutsoulas, E. "La 'sainteté' dans les œuvres biographiques de Grégoire de Nysse", in: A. Spira (ed.), *The Biographical Works of Gregory of Nyssa. Proceedings of the Fifth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, Cambridge (Ma) 1984, 221–240.
- Rahner, H. "Die Gottesgeburt. Die Lehre der Kirchenväter von der Geburt Christi im Herzen der Gläubigen", *ZKTh* 59 (1935) 333–418.
- Ramelli, I. *Gregorio di Nissa, Sull'anima e la resurrezione*, Milano 2007.
- Silvas, A.M. *Macrina the Younger. Philosopher of God*, Turnhout 2008.
- Smith, J.W. *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa*, New York 2004.
- Vogt, K. "'Becoming male': a Gnostic and Early Christian Metaphor", in: K.E. Børresen (ed.), *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, Oslo 1991, 172–187.
- Völker, W. *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes*, Tübingen 1931.
- Völker, W. *Gregorio di Nissa, filosofo e mistico*, Milano 1993.

Die Zunahme der *Parrhesie* in der Auslegung von *Hohelied* 5,7 durch Gregor von Nyssa

Piet Hein Hupsch

1 Einleitung

In *Cant* (*Oratio XII*) erwägt Gregor von Nyssa *Hohelied* 5,5–7 und gibt diesen Versen seine eigene Deutung. In *Hohelied* 5,7 wird erzählt, wie die Wächter der Mauern der Braut den Schleier abreißen. Das Entfernen des Schleiers bedeutet, wie Gregor auslegt, für die Braut die Zunahme der Kühnheit des Sprechens.¹ Die Braut rühmt sich dieser Zunahme. Nur an dieser Stelle spricht Gregor über die Zunahme der *Parrhesie*. Welche Rolle spielt danach die Zunahme der *Parrhesie* in Gregors Auffassung über den Aufstieg des Menschen zu Gott?

2 Der Kontext der Stelle, in der Gregor spricht über die Zunahme der *Parrhesie*

In *Oratio XII* fängt Gregor an, *Hohelied* 5,5a–c auszulegen: *Ich stand auf, meinem Brudersohn zu öffnen; meine Hände ließen Myrrhe tropfen, meine Finger reichliche Myrrhe.*² Die Braut kann dem Bräutigam lediglich die Tür öffnen, wenn sie freiwillig den Vorhang des Fleisches ringsherum abnimmt, i.e. die irdischen Glieder, die leiblichen Leidenschaften tötet. In seiner Auslegung *Hoheliedes* 5,5d–6c [*Meine*] *Hände am Riegel öffnete ich meinem Brudersohn; mein Brudersohn ging vorüber; meine Seele ging aus in seinem Wort*, läßt Gregor die Braut die Tür öffnen durch ihre Hände, i.e. durch ihre Werke und den Riegel des Glaubens. Der Ersehnte, ihr gesuchter Geliebter, entgeht ihr. Sie aber folgt dem vorausgehenden Logos nach. Die Braut ist verglichen mit Mose. In einem langen Exkurs³ wird Mose beschrieben als das Vorbild des Menschen der zu Gott

1 L.F. Mateo-Seco, „Parrêsia“, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco – G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 578–580. *Parrhesie* ist der am meisten charakteristische Aspekt der Freiheit des Menschen, der mit Gott in Harmonie verkehrt.

2 Die deutsche Übersetzung der Texte Gregors ist von F. Dünzl in seiner Edition von *Cant: Gregor von Nyssa – In Canticum Canticorum Homiliae – Homilien zum Hohelied*, Fontes Christiani Bände 16/1–3, Freiburg 1994.

3 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 354,8–356,16).

erhöht worden ist und immer noch unersättlich festhält am Verlangen, Gott zu sehen. Moses Seele folgte dem vorausgehenden Logos. Gregor teilt mit: Mose sei des vertrauten Umgangs von Angesicht zu Angesicht gewürdigt worden, er unterhalte sich wie ein Freund mit einem Freund. Trotzdem kommt er nicht zu einem Stillstand im Verlangen nach dem Höheren. Das Schauen von Gottes Angesicht wird dadurch vollbracht, daß man dem Logos unablässig nachfolgt. Gott geht vorüber an aller Vorstellung und Kraft des menschlichen Verstandes. Die Aussagekraft der Braut versagt; sie ruft den Bräutigam, so gut sie es vermag mit Worten, die der Seligkeit des Bräutigams gerecht werden; er aber war jedem Hinweis auf das Bezeichnete überlegen. Darum lautet *Hohelied* 5,6d–e: *Ich suchte ihn und fand ihn nicht, ich rief ihn, und er hörte nicht auf mich.*

Daraufhin verwendet Gregor den Rest seiner *Oratio XII*⁴ für den Ausleg *Hoheliedes* 5,7 *Mich fanden die Wächter, die in der Stadt die Runde machen, sie schlugen mich, sie verwundeten mich; den Schleier nahmen die Wächter der Mauern von mir.* Er deutet die Wegnahme dieses Schleiers als eine neue Stufe der Reinheit, die Wächter der Stadt als Gottes Engel die die menschliche Seele bewachen, das Schlagen und die Wunde als den göttlichen Stock des Heiligen Geistes, der durch Schlagen Heilung bewirkt.

In einer Rekapitulation⁵ beschreibt Gregor die Braut, die dem Bräutigam nachfolgt, als die menschliche Seele, die unablässig verlangt nach dem Höheren und nicht ruht: *Unaufhörlich streckt sie sich deshalb fortwährend nach dem aus, was vor ihr liegt, geht dabei aus von dem, worin sie ist, und dringt ins Innere ein, wo sie noch nicht war.*⁶ In dieser Rekapitulation erweitert Gregor seine Auslegung der geschlagenen Braut. Sie ahmt die Felswand nach woran Mose schlug.⁷ Jener Felswand ähnlich läßt die Braut, die das Wort, das aufsprudelt aus ihrer Wunde, wie aus einer Quelle, den Dürstenden zufließen. Scheinbar schließt Gregor nun ab: *Das ist es was wir bezüglich der vorliegenden Stelle zu erfassen vermochten.* Allerdings fügt er dem noch etwas hinzu: *Neid aber kommt nicht auf (bei dem Gedanken), daß jemandem von dem, der die verborgenen Mysterien enthüllt, beim vorliegenden Text eine für die Seele nützlichere Schau zuteilwerden könnte.*⁸ Wie wenn er eine Zugabe gebe, führt er die Vision Jesajas ein.

4 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 359,5–370,13).

5 ἀνακεφαλαιωσάμενοι τὴν τῶν εἰρημένων διάνοιαν, GNO VI 366,10–368,4.

6 F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993, 266–268, zeigt wie diese Rekapitulation mit ihrer Form dem Inhalt dienlich ist. Gregors Rekapitulationen sollen funktionieren wie die literarischen Darstellungen des Fortschritts innerhalb des *Cant*.

7 Num 20,11.

8 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 368,3–6).

Nachdem Gregor die Vision Jesajas hat einbezogen in die Exegese *Hoheliedes* 5:5–7 und diese Verbindung hat ausgelegt, gibt er gleichsam eine zweite Zugabe. Die Braut ist verwundet von der Hoffnungslosigkeit des Ersehnten, da sie den Unerreichbaren liebt und *sie das Verlangen nach dem Schönen für erfolglos und unstillbar hält*.⁹ Der Schleier, der der Braut ist abgenommen, ist der Schleier des Leids, weil die menschliche Seele herausfindet: *Ständig fortzuschreiten im Suchen und niemals vom Aufstieg abzulassen, eben das ist der wahre Genuss des Ersehnten, da das Verlangen, das je und je erfüllt wird, anderes Verlangen nach dem Höheren erzeugt*.¹⁰ Sowie der Schleier der Hoffnungslosigkeit ist abgenommen und die unumschreibbare Schönheit des Geliebten jeweils als besser herausstellt, verrät die Braut dem Geliebten durch die Töchter Jerusalems, i.e. die Zuhörer seiner Homilien, die Leser seines Hohelied-Kommentars, den Zustand ihrer Seele, sie sei verwundet von Liebe. Auf diese Weise gewährleistet Gregor einen reibungslosen Übergang zur Erklärung der Fortsetzung des Hoheliedes (hauptsächlich 5,8) in *Oratio XIII*.

3 Die Stelle, worin Gregor spricht über die Zunahme der *Parrhesie*

Nachdem er im Vorangehenden sozusagen seine eigene Auslegung abgeschlossen hat mit einer Rekapitulation und bemerkt hat, es gebe beim vorliegenden Text vielleicht eine für die Seele nützlichere Schau, kommend von dem, der die verborgenen Mysterien enthüllt, eröffnet Gregor sehr bescheiden den Textabschnitt worin er Is 6,1–7 in Verbindung setzt mit *Hohelied* 5,5–7: *Vielleicht aber wird jemand sagen, auch die Vision Jesajas habe etwas gemeinsam mit den vorliegenden Worten*.¹¹ Es sieht aus, als ob Gregor die Vision Jesajas als eine Zugabe betrachtet, eigentlich doch ist der Teil der *Oratio XII*, der der Vision Jesajas vorausgeht, der Auftakt der Vision selbst als des Grundstocks des Textes in dieser *Oratio*: die Enthüllung eines Geheimnisses.¹² Die Beseitigung des Vorhangs des Fleisches, das Aufstehen aus dem Tode des Bösen und das Hinterhergehen auf die Spur des Geliebten, der Exkurs über Mose, mit dem die

9 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 369,21).

10 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 369,23–370,3).

11 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 368,7–8).

12 F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 181, beschreibt die Aufnahme der Vision Jesajas als eine weitere Bezugsstelle der Heiligen Schrift und unterschätzt die Wichtigkeit der Berufungsvision Jesajas. Auch M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nysse et l'Herméneutique Biblique. Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu*, Paris 1983, 323, beschränkt die Bedeutung der Vision Jesajas auf die Möglichkeit für Gregor aufs Neue den Gegenstand des *Adutons* zu introduzieren.

Braut verglichen wird, und der Vergleich der Braut mit der Felswand woraus Mose mit dem Schlag seines Stabes Wasser sprudeln ließ, stellen die Braut bildlich dar als den Mensch die des vertrauten Umgangs mit Gott von Angesicht zu Angesicht gewürdigt worden ist und trotzdem nicht zu einem Stillstand im Verlangen nach dem Höheren kommt und in diesem Aufstieg zu Gott eine Quelle des Wortes den dürstenden Anderen wird. Der Vergleich der Braut mit Jesaja während seiner Vision ist die Bekrönung: die Zunahme ihrer *Parrhesie* gibt ihr die Gelegenheit auf die Schönheit ihres Geliebten immer besser zu schauen und ihrem Geliebten bekanntzugeben, sie sei von Gottes Liebe getroffen. Die Töchter Jerusalems sind ihre Postillons d'Amour (Überbringer ihrer Liebeserklärung) und werden gelobt mit den Worten der Braut.

3.1 *Die Vision Jesajas als Auslegung des Hoheliedes: ein enthülltes Geheimnis*

In der Einleitung auf das Einbeziehen der Vision Jesajas hält er *eine für die Seele nützlichere Schau* bei dem vorliegenden Text möglich. Anspruchslos bemerkt Gregor Neid komme nicht auf bei ihm, wenn von dem *der die verborgenen Mysterien enthüllt*,¹³ jemandem solche Schau zuteilwird. Offensichtlich betrachtet Gregor die Verbindung der Vision Jesajas mit den vorliegenden Versen des Hoheliedes als ein der verborgenen Mysterien wovon der Schleier ist abgezogen. Aus den Paralleltexten läßt sich folgern Er, der die verborgenen Mysterien enthüllt, sei Gott selbst.¹⁴ Er ist es von dem eine für die Seele nützlichere Schau den Menschen zuteilwerden kann, in diesem Fall jemandem der vielleicht sagen wird, auch die Vision Jesajas habe etwas gemeinsam mit dem vorliegenden Text. Das Einbeziehen der Vision Jesajas ist eine Enthüllung verborgener Mysterien, vergönnt von Ihm, der die verborgenen Mysterien enthüllt und den Schleier des Textes beseitigt.

3.2 *Die Vision Jesajas*

Ehe Gregor einen Vergleich anstellt zwischen Jesaja und der Braut, betont Gregor in dem Setting der Vision zwei Aspekte. Er betont, Jesaja habe zwar von der anderen Wesen ihre Flügel zählen und ihre Aufstellung und Flug beschreiben können, aber von Ihm, den er auf dem erhabenen Thron hoheitsvoll dasitzen sah, nicht seine Gestalte, sein Aussehen und seine Größe sehen können. Nur

13 παρά του ἀποκαλύπτοντος τὰ κεκρυμμένα μυστήρια, *Cant XII* (GNO VI 368,6).

14 Cf. das Ende der *Oratio IV* (GNO VI 135,9–13). In dem Prolog, in *Oratio I*, fragt Gregor Gott um Rat (ζητούμεν παρά του ἀποκαλύπτοντος τὰ κεκρυμμένα μυστήρια μαθεῖν, *Cant prol.* [GNO VI 10,15–16]).

die¹⁵ Stimme¹⁶ des Erhabenen hörte er, so sagt Jesaja, nachdem zuerst *der Türsturz vom Lobgesang der Serafim emporgehoben worden war*,¹⁷ und ihm eine glühende Kohle auf seinen Mund gelegt worden war. Gregor betont weiter daß durch den Empfang der glühenden Kohle nicht nur Jesajas Lippen sondern auch sein Gehör gereinigt worden sei, nämlich für die Aufnahme des Wortes.

Dann liefert Gregor seine Vergleiche: der Schleier, der der Braut mit roher Gewalt abgerissen wird, wird verglichen mit dem Emporheben des Türsturzes, die Wächter mit den Serafim, der Stock, womit die Braut geschlagen wird, mit der Kohle, der Schlag des Stocks mit dem Brennen der Kohle. Das gemeinsame Ergebnis wird annonciert: die Reinheit der Seele. Es gibt daneben eine weitere Ähnlichkeit: Jesaja empfindet keinen Schmerz durch die glühende Kohle, sondern er erlangt Herrlichkeit, weil er leuchtend wird. Die Braut empfindet ebenso wenig Schmerz aufgrund des Schlags des Stocks, sondern sie rühmt sich der Zunahme der *Parrhesie* infolge der Wegnahme der Verhüllung, die in dem Hohelied Schleier genannt wird.¹⁸

3.3 *Der Eingang des τὸ ἄδυτον*

Das Emporheben des Türsturzes macht für Jesaja die Schau der Dinge im ἄδυτον frei von Hindernissen, nachdem er zuerst nur die Stimme des Hoherhabenen sagt gehört zu haben, in Übereinstimmung mit Gregors Bemerkung in *Oratio* I¹⁹, wenn die Brautins *Adyton* des Paradieses gelangt ist, sieht sie auf gleiche Weise als Paulus das Unsichtbare und hört sie unsagbare Worte. Der Eingang des ἄδυτον wird Jesaja geöffnet dank dem Emporheben des τὸ ὑπέρθυρον; die Wegnahme des Schleiers der Braut führt zur Zunahme ihrer *Parrhesie*. *Parrhesie* als eine Form der Schau der Dinge im ἄδυτον.

3.4 *Der Stock und die Kohle; der Schlag des Stockes und das Brennen der Kohle*

In der Vision Jesajas, wie Gregor die beschreibt, legt einer der Serafim auf den Mund des Propheten eine glühende Kohle, die durch das Brennen nicht nur

15 Dünzls Übersetzung (p. 657) ist hier falsch: nicht *eine Stimme*, sondern *seine Stimme*, entsprechend der vorangehenden Aufzählung: *seine Gestalt, sein Aussehen und seine Größe*.

16 φωνῆς δὲ μόνης, *Cant* XII (GNO VI 368,15).

17 *Cant* XII (GNO VI 368,15–16).

18 ἀλλ' ἐπικαυχᾶται τῇ τῆς παρρησίας προσθήκῃ ἐν τῇ ἀφαιρέσει τοῦ προκαλύμματος, ὃ θέριτρον ὁ λόγος ὠνόμασεν, *Cant* XII (GNO VI 369,11–13). J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et Théologie Mystique*, Paris 1944, 112 übersetzt diese Stelle: „[...] dans une augmentation de confiance (παρρησία) elle se glorifie (ἐπικαυχᾶται) de l'enlèvement du voile“ und unterlässt ἐπικαυχᾶται mit τῇ τῆς παρρησίας προσθήκῃ zu verbinden.

19 *Cant* I (GNO VI 40,10–12).

die Lippen reinigt sondern auch das Gehör, so daß der Prophet Gottes Wort empfangen kann²⁰ und offensichtlich aussprechen kann, wie aus seiner ausgeschriebenen Vision hervorgeht. Mit diesem Brennen der glühenden Kohle vergleicht Gregor den Schlag des Stockes der Wächter der Stadt. Der Stock ist in einem früheren Abschnitt der *Oratio XII* in Beziehung gebracht zu dem Stab in Ps 23,4d, worüber David sagt: *Dein Stock und dein Stab, sie trösteten mich.*²¹ Noch bevor Gregor rekapituliert und darauf die Vision Jesajas anführt, gibt er eine endgültige Erklärung des Stockes. In einer kombinierten Anführung des Ps 23,4d und des Dt 32,39 (*Ich werde töten und ich werde lebendig machen, ich werde schlagen und ich werde auch heilen.*) hält Gregor den Stock, womit die Wächter der Stadt die Braut verwunden, für den Stab der von Gott kommt, tröstet und Heilung bewirkt. Dieser Stock ist der Heilige Geist.²² Auch Paul ist geschlagen worden mit dem Stock des Geistes. Der Wunden die den Schlag des Stocks des Geistes markieren, der Male Christi²³ die er an seinem Leib trägt, rühmt er sich,²⁴ so fügt Gregor dem Schriftvers hinzu. Auch bei der Braut verursacht der Schlag des Stabs des Geistes durch ihre Wirkungskraft ein sichtbares Prägemaß der Verwundung dessen die Braut sich rühmt. Dank dem Schlag der Wächter ist ihr, so stellt die Braut prahlend fest, eine zusätzliche Gabe bei ihrem Fortschritt zum Oberen hin zuteil geworden.²⁵

3.5 *Das Endergebnis bei der Braut und bei dem Prophet*

Das Endergebnis des Schlages des Stocks und des Brennens der Kohle ist die Reinheit der Seele. Bei dem Propheten Jesaja, der keinen Schmerz empfindet wegen des Brennens der glühenden Kohle, wird die Reinheit sichtbar in seiner von Gott kommenden leuchtenden Verherrlichung. Auch bei der Braut wird die Reinheit sichtbar: sie beklagt sich nicht über Schmerz wegen der Schläge mit dem Stock der Wächter, vielmehr gibt die Wegnahme der letzten Verhüllung, ihres Schleiers, ihr Grund zum Jubeln über die Zunahme ihrer *Parrhesie*.²⁶

20 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 368,17–19).

21 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 362,8–9).

22 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 365,17–18).

23 Gal 6,17.

24 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 366,2–3).

25 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 365,9–10).

26 In seinem Kapitel *Der Leitgedanke der Veränderung zum Besseren* (244 u.f.) erwähnt Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 246 n. 22, allerdings diese Passage als eine Passage worin es *προσθήκη* gibt, aber unterlässt es die Wichtigkeit des Zusatzes *προσθήκη* zur *Parrhesie* für das Verstehen von Gregors Sicht auf die *Epektasis* zu erwähnen. Ebenfalls nicht J. Gaïth, *La Conception de la Liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1953, 66, der *Parrhesie* an die innere Freiheit des freien Gewissens knüpft. W. Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, Wiesba-

4 *Parrhesie* in dem Aufstieg zu Gott

Gregor bezieht die Vision Jesajas ein in seine Auslegung des Hoheliedes und betrachtet diese Verbindung als eine Entschleierung verborgener Mysterien. Gott schenkt ihm diese Entschleierung als eine Schau, die nützlicher ist für die Seele als seine vorhergehende Auslegung *Hoheliedes* 5,5–7. Ähnlich wie Jesaja wird die Braut gereinigt, in ihrem Falle durch das Schlagen des Stocks der Wächter der Stadt, die sie verwunden mit dem Stab des Geistes und auf diese Weise ihr den letzten Schleier abnehmen, so daß sie sich der ihr gegebenen Zunahme ihrer *Parrhesie* rühmen kann und im τὸ ἄδύτον das Unsichtbare mehr und mehr schauen kann und die unsagbaren Worte immer besser hören kann und sie auch ihrerseits mit ihrer Wunde eine Quelle des Wortes den dürstenden Anderen wird, mit anderen Worten selbst das Wort aussprechen wird. Der Aufstieg zu Gott ist also verknüpft, nicht nur mit der nach Reinigung ermöglichten Aufnahme, sondern auch mit dem der Aufnahme folgenden Aussprechen des Wortes im Beisein von ihren Mitmenschen, i.e. die Töchter Jerusalems, wie Gregor im letzten Teil seiner *Oratio XII* und in seiner *Oratio XIII* eingehend erörtert. Die Hinzufügung der Zunahme zu der *Parrhesie*, der einzige *Locus* in den Schriften Gregors, ist auch daher so wichtig, weil Zunahme das Bindeglied bildet zwischen der Vision Jesajas und der darauf folgenden Auslegung des Schleiers als des Schleiers des Leids, der abgenommen wird. Zunahme ist das Schlagwort für diese Auslegung. Der Schleier des Leids wird abgenommen wenn die Braut herausfindet: *Ständig fortzuschreiten im Suchen und niemals vom Aufstieg abzulassen, eben das ist der wahre Genuss des Ersehnten, da das Verlangen, das je und je erfüllt wird, anderes Verlangen nach dem Höheren erzeugt.*²⁷ Wenn der Schleier der Hoffnungslosigkeit abgenommen ist und dadurch auf die unbeschreibliche Schönheit des Geliebten immer besser geschaut werden kann, verrät die Braut dem Geliebten durch die Töchter Jerusalems den Zustand ihres Herzens: sie sei verwundet von Liebe. Die Zunahme ihrer *Parrhesie* gibt ihr die Gelegenheit auf die Schönheit ihres Geliebten immer besser zu schauen und ihrem Geliebten bekanntzugeben,

den 1955, 238, spricht allerdings über das Wachsen der *Parrhesie* womit der Aufstieg zur Vollkommenheit parallel geht, aber spricht nicht über den Effekt der wachsenden *Parrhesie*: die Liebeserklärung für den Unerreichbaren an die Zuhörer als Postillons d'Amour. In ihrem Kapitel *Structures du langage mystique symbolique* (M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nysse et l'Herméneutique Biblique*, 336), erörtert Canévet detailliert diesen Teil der *Oratio XII* wegen der Beschreibung von *Inversio* als eine dieser Strukturen: das Brennen der Kohle und der Schlag des Stockes verletzen zwar, aber führen ebenfalls dazu, daß Jesaja und die Braut jubeln.

27 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 369,23–370,3).

sie sei von Gottes Liebe getroffen. Die Töchter Jerusalems sind ihre Postillons d'Amour. Die *Parrhesie* hat in dieser Schrift Gregors eine neue Dimension bekommen: die *Parrhesie* als der vertraute Umgang mit Gott ist von dynamischer Art. Die *Parrhesie* kenzeichnet den unendlichen Aufstieg zum Geliebten dem die menschliche Seele nachfolgt. Die *Parrhesie* wächst weil die menschliche Seele, die von Gottes Liebe verwundet ist und Sehnsucht nach dem Geliebten hat, immer ein brennendes Verlangen nach dem Höheren entwickelt, auf das Unsichtbare immer mehr sieht, das Unsagbare mehr und mehr aussprechen kann und dies zum Ausdruck bringt im Beisein von denen, die wie die Töchter Jerusalems dem Menschen auf dem Fuße in seinem Aufstieg zu Gott folgen. Die *Parrhesie* in *Oratio XII* enthält also nicht nur die Kühnheit des Sprechens im Beisein von Gott, sondern auch die Kühnheit des Sprechens über die Liebe für den Unerreichbaren im Beisein von den Vertrauten des Menschen, ja sogar diese Vertrauten erfüllen die Aufgabe der Postillons d'Amour. Die prophetische Proklamation der Botschaft, der Mensch sei getroffen von Gottes Liebe, spricht die Zuhörer dieser Botschaft an als Postillons d'Amour, gehört zum Aufstieg zu Gott und vergrößert die Gegenliebe dieses von Gottes Liebe getroffenen Menschen. In *Oratio XIII*²⁸ weiß die Braut sie sei gezwungen die Schönheit des Bräutigams ihren vertrauten Jungfrauen zu zeigen, und führt sie die Töchter Jerusalems zur Theophanie hin die uns durch das Fleisch zuteilwurde. Der Mensch der von Gottes Liebe getroffen ist und seine Gegenliebe für Gott durch seine Mittmenschen als Postillons d'Amour zum Ausdruck bringt, wird eine Quelle des Wortes, auf diese Weise, daß dieser Mensch in seiner vermehrten *Parrhesie* seine Mittmenschen zum Fleisch gewordenen Wort führt. Die *Parrhesie* dieses Menschen macht sichtbar und hörbar, daß die menschliche Sprache, die Sprache eines Menschen, der von Gottes Liebe getroffen ist, an der erlösenden Liebe Gottes teilnimmt und Quelle der heilsamen Gnade Gottes sein kann.

5 Der gesellschaftliche Kontext der *Parrhesie* und das eigene Kolorit der *Parrhesie* Gregors

Der gesellschaftliche Kontext des Begriffes *Parrhesie* am Ende des 4. Jahrhunderts ist der Hintergrund der *Parrhesie* wie von Gregor beschrieben in seinem Hohelied-Kommentar.²⁹ Die *Parrhesie* der Honoratioren, die sich auf ihre

²⁸ Cant XIII (GNO VI 383,15–19).

²⁹ *Parrhesie* hat ihre Wurzeln im klassischen Altertum, besonders im Griechischen Stadtstaat, in dem der freie männliche Bürger *Parrhesie* besitzt. Einen umfassenden Überblick bietet I. Sluiter – R.M. Rosen (eds.), *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity*, Leiden 2004. M. Fou-

Paideia einbildeten und mittels ihrer Freiheit des Sprechens zu den Gesprächspartnern der Machthaber, in spezifischem Fall des Kaisers Konstantinopels, aufwarfen, diene als Vorbild für christliche Bischöfe und Mönche, die am Ende des 4. Jahrhunderts durch ihre Lebensart des Asketismus auf die Behörden wachsenden Einfluß ausübten. Griechische *Paideia* wurde eine Vorstufe der wahren Philosophie, nämlich der des Christentums, das seine spezifische Form der *Parrhesie* innehat. Nach dem Vorbild der Märtyrer entwickelten Bischöfe und Mönche ihre *Parrhesie* als Glaubenszeugnis und vergrößerten damit ihr freimütiges Sprechen im Beisein von den Behörden dieser Welt, aber vor allem funktionierte ihre *Parrhesie* als das freimütige Sprechen im Beisein von Gott. Hierdurch konnte der *Parrhesiastikos* als Intermediär funktionieren und stellvertretend beten für seinen oder ihren Mitgläubiger.³⁰ Diese Bedeutung und diese Funktion des Begriffes *Parrhesie* finden wir auch in den Schriften Gregors.³¹

In Hinblick auf die gesellschaftliche Bedeutung und Funktion, die *Parrhesie* am Ende des 4. Jahrhunderts innehat, gibt Gregor in seinem Hohelied-Kommentar dem Begriff *Parrhesie* ein eigenes, spezifisches Kolorit. Die wachsende *Parrhesie*, in diesem Fall nicht eines Mannes, sondern der Braut des Hoheliedes, bewirkt, daß die Braut ihre Liebe zum Unerreichbaren, wovon sie verwundet ist, immer mehr zum Ausdruck bringen kann und will. Wegen dieser Liebe geht die Braut aus von dem, worin sie ist, und findet sie keinen Halt auf der Suche nach ihrem Geliebten. Sie bringt diese Liebe zum Ausdruck im Beisein von ihren Zuhörern. Mittels ihrer wachsenden *Parrhesie* macht sie diese Zuhörer zu Postillons d'Amour, denen ihrerseits die Braut die Quelle des göttlichen Wortes wird. Sie führt die Zuhörer zur Theophanie, die ihnen durch das Fleisch zuteilwurde. Hier also ergibt sich, daß die wahrhafte *Parrhesie* der Christen, wie von Gregor beschrieben, von Natur aus ein relationaler Begriff ist, durch Reziprozität gekennzeichnet ist und Menschen dynamisiert.

cault – J. Pearson (ed.), *Fearless Speech*, Los Angeles 2001, bestrebt sich mittels einer Nachforschung der Entwicklung des Begriffes *Parrhesie* im klassischen Altertum eine Genealogie der kritischen Einstellung der abendländischen Philosophie zu konstruieren.

30 Cf. P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire*, Wisconsin 1992, *passim*. C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity. The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*, Berkeley 2005, 268–269.

31 Gregor lobt Basil für seine Freimütigkeit gegenüber dem Kaiser Valens (παρρησίαν Χριστιανοῦ πρὸς δυναστείαν, *Eun* I 130 [GNO I 66,15–17]); Macrina ist dank ihrer *Parrhesie* die Fürsprecherin vor Gott (τὴν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν παρρησίαν ὥστε πύργον ἡμῖν ἰσχύος εἶναι καὶ ἔπλον εὐδοκίας, *Epist* [GNO VIII/2 14–19]). Der Märtyrer Theodor wird gebeten er möge vor Gott seine *Parrhesie* ins Werk setzen für seine Mitchristen (ὡς μάρτυς ὑπὲρ τῶν ὁμοδοῦλων χρῆσαι τῇ παρρησίᾳ, *Theod* [GNO X/1 70,24–25]).

Diese *Parrhesie* ist nicht beschränkt auf die Fürsprache für den Mitmenschen, die der *Parrhesiastikos* wegen seines Glaubenszeugnisses und seiner Vertraulichkeit mit Gott bei Gott einlegen kann, sondern diese *Parrhesie* macht die Mitmenschen des *Parrhesiastikos* auch zu Teilnehmern am Aufstieg zu Gott. Der *Parrhesiastikos* und seine Zuhörer sind untereinander verbunden in wachsender, gegenseitiger Abhängigkeit. Für die Zuhörer ist der *Parrhesiastikos* der Mitchristen, der zur Theophanie des fleischgewordenen Sohnes führt, wohingegen der *Parrhesiastikos* seine Liebe zum unerreichbaren Geliebte dank den anwesenden Zuhörern als Postillons d'Amour zum Ausdruck bringen kann. Der *Parrhesiastikos* und die Zuhörer haben miteinander und in wechselseitiger Abhängigkeit an dem immer weitergehenden Aufstieg zu Gott Anteil.

Mittels dieser eigenen und spezifischen Ausgestaltung des Begriffes *Parrhesie* vertieft Gregor die Bedeutung und die Funktion des Begriffes *Parrhesie*, wie dieser am Ende des 4. Jahrhunderts im Kommen war. Die wachsende *Parrhesie* ist nicht beschränkt auf die Verbindung des Menschen zu Gott, sondern ist der prägnante Ausdruck der dynamischen Bewegung, womit Menschen sich gemeinsam auf dem Weg zu Gott setzen, der die Menschen immer zu sich heranzieht. Die Zunahme der *Parrhesie* als ein neuer Aspekt des unendlichen Sichausstreckens zu Gott, der *Epektasis*.

Bibliographie

- Brown, P., *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire*, Wisconsin 1992.
- Canévet, M., *Grégoire de Nysse et l'Herméneutique Biblique. Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu*, Paris 1983.
- Daniélou, J., *Platonisme et Théologie Mystique*, Paris 1944.
- Dünzl, F., *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993.
- Dünzl, F., *Gregor von Nyssa. Homilien zum Hohelied*, Fontes Christiani Bände 16/1–3, Freiburg 1994.
- Foucault, M. – J. Pearson (ed.), *Fearless Speech*, Los Angeles 2001.
- Gaith, J., *La Conception de la Liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1953.
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. „Parrësia“, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco – G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 578–580.
- Rapp, C., *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity. The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*, Berkeley 2005.
- Sluiter, I. – R.M. Rosen (eds.), *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity*, Leiden 2004.
- Völker, W., *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, Wiesbaden 1955.

La tríada yegua – amiga – hija y la estructura de los libros III–IV del comentario niseno al *Cantar*

Manuel Mira

Objetivo de estas páginas es analizar algunos aspectos de la estructura de *Cant*. Daniélou defendió que Gregorio describe la vida espiritual según el esquema de las vías purgativa, iluminativa e unitiva.¹ Cortesi ha relacionado la estructura de *Cant* con el progreso espiritual del cristiano, que debe actualizar con coherencia progresiva su configuración bautismal con Cristo; percibe que Gregorio alude a la auto-donación de Dios al hombre con las imágenes de la iluminación, el perfume y el alimento, y estudia cómo la idea de progreso es acogida en el empleo de esas imágenes.² Puesto que los itinerarios descritos por *Cant* I o bien sitúan el *Cantar* dentro del cuerpo de los escritos sapienciales salomónicos,³ o bien no son desarrollados en el ámbito de las cuatro primeras homilías,⁴ aquí se investigará si la descripción del alma como yegua – amiga del Verbo – hermana, refleja la estructura de *Cant* III y IV.

1 Enunciación y fuerza estructural de la tríada

En *Cant* IV, Gregorio, comenta el versículo “Como un lirio en medio de los cardos, así es mi hermana en medio de las hijas”:

- 1 J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1954, 17–23. G. Maspero, “Cant”, en: L.F. Mateo-Seco, G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 120–125, presenta *Cant* y cita estudios recientes.
- 2 A. Cortesi, *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nissa. Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale*, Roma 2000. R.A. Norris Jr., *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012, xx–xxiii, describe fecha y destinatario de la obra, y defiende su talante homilético.
- 3 Cuando expone las tríadas esclavo – mercenario – enamorado (*Cant* I [GNO VI 15,13–16,14] y *Proverbios – Ecclesiastés – Cantar de los cantares* [GNO VI 16,14–27,5]), Gregorio explicita en efecto que todo el *Cantar* se dirige a quienes tienen ya una vida espiritual sólida.
- 4 En *Cant* I (GNO VI 23–24) se describe el itinerario de la esposa. En GNO VI 25, el camino de Israel por el desierto hasta la teofanía del Sinaí. En GNO VI 31–32 se alude a la necesidad de un progreso continuo. En GNO VI 40, Gregorio combina en una sola descripción todos los elementos. Es lógico que no se pueda hallar en las primeras cuatro homilías el desarrollo de estos esquemas pues son esquemas globales, que Gregorio despliega a lo largo de las quince homilías.

“Como un lirio en medio de los cardos, dice, por tanto, así es mi hermana entre las hijas”. ¡Cuán grande es el progreso en la ascensión hacia las alturas que vemos que se ha producido en el alma! Primera ascensión fue ser comparada con la yegua que purifica de la potencia egipcia. Segunda ascensión, el hacerse amiga y el transformársele los ojos, haciéndose de paloma. Tercera ascensión, ahora, el no ser llamada ya amiga, sino hermana del Señor. “El que haga la voluntad de mi Padre que está en los cielos, dice, ese es mi hermano y mi hermana y mi madre”. Puesto que ha llegado a ser flor a la que las tentaciones que producen cardos no interponen ningún obstáculo para convertirse en lirio, olvidada de su pueblo y de la casa de su padre, miró al Padre verdadero (por eso también es llamada hermana del Hijo, introducida en esta familiaridad por el Espíritu de adopción filial, y apartada de la comunión con las hijas del mal llamado padre), de nuevo se hace superior a sí misma y observa un misterio con los ojos de paloma (quiero decir, con el espíritu de profecía).⁵

El texto caracteriza las tres etapas según el esquema purificación, contemplación, identificación con Cristo por la obediencia. Las homilías III y IV describen las dos primeras etapas. El resto de la homilía IV presenta la tercera.⁶

2 El alma como yegua que desbarata el ejército egipcio

El Niseno afirma que *Cant* III, donde el esposo habla directamente a la esposa, es con respecto a *Cant* II, donde la esposa conversó con los amigos del esposo, como la revelación de Dios a Israel en el Sinaí al tercer día, tras los dos días anteriores en los que se ha purificado.⁷

El alma que se acerca a Dios por las virtudes la compara el *Cantar* con la yegua que desbarata el ejército egipcio. Quien destruye el poder del Faraón es el Ángel del Señor. Pero el alma antes esclava, si se libera de esa esclavitud por la ablución mística, y conserva después esa pureza alejándose de los malos pen-

5 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 116–117). F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993, 269, pone en duda que este esquema rija el curso de las ideas de las homilías, y considera que Gregorio antepone el progreso continuo al esquema tripartito.

6 A. Cortesi, *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nissa*, 165, cita este pasaje, mostrando sus conexiones con otros del comentario, pero no presenta esas relaciones de modo exhaustivo. Gregorio describe al cristiano como hermano de Cristo en *Perf* (GNO VIII/1 203,8–20).

7 Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 70–72).

samientos y del pecado, puede participar con sus virtudes en esa victoria sobre el Faraón y ser comparada con esa yegua.⁸

Gregorio comenta a continuación la afirmación de que el cuello de la esposa es semejante a pequeños puertos, aplicándola al cuello de los potros, curvo y hermoso. Añade que puesto que los puertos son el lugar en el que los navegantes se protegen, cabe indicar que esos pequeños puertos son las virtudes, que protegen de las pasiones y dan serenidad al alma. Además, esas virtudes embellecen el cuello como un collar.⁹

Las virtudes aquí son consideradas en un momento inicial quizá del desarrollo de la vida espiritual, en el que la agitación de las pasiones es todavía cercana en el tiempo y es recordada con desagrado.

Los amigos del esposo imponen a la esposa unos adornos fabricados con sucedáneo de oro y de plata. Y Gregorio comenta que la yegua que va a servir de montura al rey debe ser enjaezada; y que el alma purificada por las virtudes, que va a recibir a Dios conviene que sea adornada con enseñanzas sobre Dios. Estas enseñanzas son sucedáneo de oro: parecen hermosas, pero no representan bien a Dios, quien está por encima de todo conocimiento. Sólo con la fe puede el alma acogerlo, convirtiéndose en yegua montada por Dios.¹⁰

Los comentarios siguientes abandonan esta línea interpretativa, pues comienza a hablar la esposa, y sus palabras no se pueden aplicar a la yegua. Con todo, Gregorio conseguirá describir un progreso espiritual continuo.

En efecto, cuando la esposa afirma que “su nardo ha dado su aroma”, Gregorio comenta que el nardo es un ungüento producido con muchos aromas y que esta frase significa que el alma purificada por las virtudes, ilustrada por las enseñanzas sobre Dios y por la presencia en ella de Dios, percibe la presencia de Dios al notar en ella la presencia de la unión de todas las virtudes, con la cual se hace presente en nosotros Dios, que de por sí es inaccesible al conocimiento. Y así ofrece ese aroma a los demás como un medio para que conozcan a Cristo. Gregorio alude también a que el perfecto no puede fijar la mirada en el mismo Verbo de Dios, como tampoco en el disco solar, pero ve el sol en sí mismo como en un espejo, pues los rayos de la virtud divina brillando en la vida purificada por medio de una impasibilidad inmaculada hacen para nosotros visible al invisible. Y afirma que el apóstol Pablo fue luz y aroma de Cristo para quienes lo conocieron.¹¹

8 Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 73–78).

9 Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 80–82).

10 Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 83–88).

11 Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 89–90).

La esposa afirma: “mi hermano es para mí un racimo en flor del viñedo de Gad”. Gregorio explica que la esposa afirma que en ella ha nacido Cristo como racimo todavía en flor, que en la pasión producirá vino. En efecto, Cristo nacido en las almas crece en quienes lo acogen, y no es igual en todos, sino que se acomoda a la medida de cada alma, haciéndose niño, o avanzado, o perfecto; por ello, esa presencia se puede comparar a las uvas, que pasan por varias fases de crecimiento: el capullo, la flor, el fruto, la madurez, la conversión en vino.¹²

Así Gregorio sitúa esta identificación con Cristo en un momento inicial del desarrollo espiritual, como corresponde al puesto de *Cant* III dentro de todo el comentario, y prepara el terreno para exponer a continuación configuraciones más estrechas del alma con Cristo.¹³

3 El alma como amiga del esposo

El inicio de *Cant* IV compara el modo en que los orfebres purifican repetidamente el oro con las sucesivas purificaciones con que Dios devuelve su belleza al alma que perdió su hermosura original adhiriéndose al mal.¹⁴

Gregorio trató ya antes el tema del ennegrecimiento del alma y de las sucesivas purificaciones.¹⁵ Al comenzar la descripción de una nueva etapa del progreso del alma – vista ahora como virgen – coloca un nuevo momento de purificación;¹⁶ e indica de modo oportuno que Dios no purifica el alma tan sólo una vez, sino cuantas veces sea necesario para devolverle su belleza original.

El esposo interpela a la esposa: “He aquí que eres hermosa, amiga mía, muy hermosa”. Gregorio comenta que el hombre ha sido creado libre y que cuando elige el mal inmediatamente se aleja del bien, afeándose, y cuando elige el bien se aparta del mal, embelleciéndose, y que el esposo alaba la belleza del alma que ha abandonado la maldad, y brilla por el reflejo en ella del sol.¹⁷

12 Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 96–97).

13 A. Cortesi, *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nissa*, 81–169, citando este pasaje, sostiene que Gregorio describe la divinización del alma por Dios como una iluminación, y la salvación del hombre como una iluminación de la oscuridad en la que el pecado le ha sumido.

14 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 100–101).

15 *Cant* II (GNO VI 50–60) trata la pérdida de la belleza original y su recuperación gracias a Dios.

16 En *Cant* III (GNO VI 70–72) se describe la purificación con que comienza la primera etapa.

17 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 101–104).

Todo esto estaba ya presente en la descripción del alma como yegua,¹⁸ pero ahora el Niseno no describe el logro sino la posesión de un estado, y añade la referencia al libre albedrío y a la incompatibilidad entre virtud y vicio.¹⁹

Gregorio alude a continuación a la alabanza que el esposo dirige a la esposa según la cual afirma que tiene ojos de paloma. Puesto que los ojos reflejan lo que ven, la esposa, en cuyos ojos se ve una paloma, mira ya las realidades espirituales. Al ver la belleza del esposo ahora por primera vez, la alaba y juzga con acierto sobre el verdadero bien.²⁰

En estas líneas, dejada atrás la purificación, el Capadocio describe la contemplación. En la homilía III la esposa percibía de modo impreciso la presencia del esposo al oler su perfume,²¹ mientras que ahora lo hace con el sentido de la vista espiritual. Gregorio, al insistir en la identificación del verdadero bien, sigue la tradición según la cual tras la purificación, se alcanza la contemplación que permite ver la imperfección de los bienes terrenos.²²

Gregorio interpreta a continuación las palabras de la esposa “compartes con nosotros la sombra en el lecho”. La sombra es la humanidad que Cristo asumió: vela la divinidad, pero posibilita el contacto mediato con Dios. El lecho es símbolo de la unión entre Dios y la humanidad (τὴν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἀνάκρασιν τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως), verificada en la humanidad del Verbo.²³

La esposa describe acto seguido la morada en la que se encuentra la cámara nupcial, precisando que el techo está formado por cedros y cipreses. Gregorio recuerda que el Señor es quien edifica el alma como morada suya y la materia con que esa casa se edifica. El cedro con que está edificado el techo, incorruptible por naturaleza, son las virtudes, capaces de resistir la lluvia de las tentaciones. Los vencejos, que viven en los cedros, simbolizan la pureza, por

18 Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 76–77.80–81.86–87). La descripción de la belleza de la esposa, iluminada por el Verbo, encuentra más paralelos en GNO VI 90, donde el Niseno no está comentando ya las palabras del *Cantar* que aluden al alma como yegua, sino las palabras que la esposa dirige a los amigos del esposo. Esto confirma que al inicio de *Cant* IV Gregorio da por supuesto que el alma de la que habla se encuentra en el estado final al que ha llegado en *Cant* III.

19 Estos dos aspectos fueron mencionados en *Cant* II (GNO VI 55–56): “Dio a la naturaleza racional la gracia del libre albedrío y añadió la capacidad de elegir lo que desee, de modo que el autodomínio tuviera campo y que el bien no fuera forzado y no deseado, sino realización de la libertad”; “nada es la sustancia del mal más que el alejamiento del bien”.

20 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 105–107).

21 *Cant* III (GNO VI 88–89): ὥς γὰρ ὑμεῖς, φησὶν, οὐκ αὐτὸ τὸ ἀκήρατον τῆς θεότητος χρυσίον ἀλλ’ ὁμοιώματα διὰ τῶν χωρητῶν ἡμῖν νοημάτων τοῦ χρυσοῦ χαρίζεσθε [...] οὕτω καὶ γὰρ διὰ τῆς εὐπνοίας τοῦ ἔμου μύρου τὴν αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου εὐωδίαν τῇ αἰσθήσει παρεδεξάμεν.

22 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 22).

23 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 107–109).

ser reacios a emparejarse. Los cipreses son apropiados para el artesanado del techo por ser olorosos y dúctiles: representan la manifestación externa de las virtudes, que deben hacerse patentes en obras buenas, que acercan los hombres a Dios.²⁴

Por último, la esposa afirma que es una flor de la tierra, un lirio de los valles. Y Gregorio explica que la tierra simboliza la naturaleza humana, por acoger las semillas que se siembran en ella, y que Dios ha conseguido que en ella nazca la esposa toda llena de virtudes. El lirio simboliza con su blancura la virtud de la templanza, y el valle, la vida presente frente a la futura. Esta flor florece al final del tallo, como las virtudes sobrepujan los deseos terrenos.²⁵

La descripción de la humanidad de Cristo como sombra que hace posible contemplar a Dios se relaciona con la contemplación,²⁶ pero introduce también el tema de la encarnación, descrita como el medio por el que Dios se une a la humanidad en la Iglesia.²⁷ La insistencia en la unión simbolizada por el lecho permite a Gregorio introducir la fase unitiva del progreso espiritual. Así, se entiende que dedique tanta atención a las virtudes en la interpretación de cedros y cipreses, pues virtud es para Gregorio otro nombre de la vida de Cristo en el hombre. Ya mencionó la virtud como medio para derrotar al faraón y para proteger la serenidad del alma de las tempestades de la vida.²⁸ Ahora no solo permite evitar los vicios, sino salvaguardar los tesoros que la esposa custodia en la cámara nupcial. Gregorio, tras recordar al vencejo como símbolo de pureza,²⁹ añade que la virtud ilustra a los demás hombres con el testimonio de una vida

24 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 109–112). F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 88–89, menciona la idea de unión con Cristo presente en el texto, dándole así particular relevancia.

25 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 113–115).

26 Cortesi, *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nissa*, 94–96, relaciona esta imagen de la sombra con el mundo simbólico de la iluminación, como imagen de la divinización del hombre, pues da a entender que Dios es luz y que nos comunica esa luz por medio de Cristo.

27 *Cant* III (GNO VI 95–97) ve en las palabras “mi esposo es para mí un racimo de uvas en flor en los viñedos de Gad” una referencia a la presencia de Cristo en el alma, si bien en una fase inicial, pues la uva está aún “en flor”. Los dos pasajes comentados ahora emplean las imágenes del texto sagrado y usan un léxico diverso: la unión esponsal de Cristo con la Iglesia y la construcción. Sin embargo, ambas homilías aluden al periodo de la vida terrena del Señor como al periodo de la “economía” (οἰκονομία; 96,2 y 107,9), y denominan la recepción del Verbo en el alma con los verbos “acoger” (δέχομαι; 96,8 y 108,5) o “recibir” (χωράω; 96,10 y 108,5,6).

28 Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 75,81).

29 También *Cant* III (GNO VI 79,1–6) ve a la tórtola como símbolo de “la vida pura” (ἡ καθαρά ζωή), comentario situado en la fase de desarrollo de las virtudes, antes de la contemplación. Ambos pasajes comparten también el verbo “copular” (συνδύαζω), si bien en diversas formas.

buena, alusión más explícita al apostolado que el genérico dar a conocer a Dios que se atribuye al alma como yegua.³⁰ La templanza del lirio alude a la unión, y la mención a la vida futura introduce la descripción de la siguiente elevación.

4 El alma como hermana del Hijo

Al alma que busca cumplir la voluntad del Padre celestial y verlo, olvidando incluso su pueblo y la casa de su padre, la llama el Señor hermana y la introduce así en la familiaridad consigo por el Espíritu de adopción.

Esa alma ve un manzano en el bosque, es decir, en la vida pecaminosa de los hombres fértil en pasiones donde las bestias se ocultan. Las bestias destruyen la buena viña de la naturaleza humana. Por eso fue plantado el manzano en el bosque. El manzano es consustancial al hombre, pues es un árbol, pero por su fruto sabroso es superior al bosque más que el lirio es superior al cardo, pues causa placer no sólo a dos, sino a tres sentidos. La esposa sabe que el esposo es superior a ella, y por eso se llama a sí misma lirio y al esposo manzano. En ese manzano pueden ser injertadas ramas de todos los árboles del bosque, es decir, los enemigos del esposo, pasando así de hijos de la oscuridad y la ira a hijos de la luz y la paz.³¹ La esposa desea reposar a la sombra del manzano y gustar su dulce fruto; ha sido dado al hombre el poder del deseo para ansiar esos bienes.³²

La redención lleva al hombre de la vida pecaminosa a la virtuosa y a la fecundidad. La purificación se ve ahora como el injertarse en Cristo árbol. La esposa no es purificada, sino que contempla la purificación de la humanidad realizada por el Verbo; esto pone el pasaje en relación con la contemplación.

La esposa avanza y expresa el deseo de ser introducida en la casa del vino, para beber de la prensa del lagar más copiosamente, conocer al agricultor y contemplar el misterio del vino,³³ que enrojece las vestiduras del esposo.³⁴

30 Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 90,11–14): “los rayos de aquella verdadera y divina potencia, brillando en la vida purificada por medio de su desbordante pureza nos hacen visible al invisible, y, dibujando el sol en nuestro espejo, hacen captable al inaccesible”.

31 A. Cortesi, *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nisa*, 100–105, apoya en este texto su teoría sobre el progreso del alma como una iluminación cada vez más intensa.

32 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 116–120). Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 91–92, subraya el contenido salvífico.

33 A. Cortesi, *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nissa*, 212–217, ve en el misterio del vino la participación del cristiano en la pasión del Señor.

34 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 119–120).

La homilía ya había alabado el afán de superación de la esposa, que encarna la idea nisena de progreso continuo.³⁵ La imagen del beber de la misma prensa del vino expresa plásticamente el deseo de plenitud en el amor en el que arde la esposa. El deseo de contemplar el misterio del vino pone en primer plano el léxico de la contemplación, y sigue a la precedente purificación.³⁶

Ahora, la esposa pide: “ordenad en mí la caridad”. Según Gregorio, pide con estas palabras la gracia de vivir ordenadamente la caridad, ya que primero hay que amar a Dios y a la propia esposa, y después evitar devolver mal por mal. También es posible que pida a los amigos del esposo que la gracia de la unión con Dios, recuperada por don de Dios, sea ordenada, y se confirme en ella la opción por el bien por medio del esfuerzo y la atención.³⁷

En las fases anteriores, a la contemplación seguía la configuración con Cristo por medio de las virtudes. En la presente etapa, tras una posible referencia a la contemplación, y antes de que el tema de las virtudes sea abordado, Gregorio describe el deseo de la esposa de crecer en caridad, la más alta de las virtudes, para vivirla de modo perfecto. La caridad se une a las virtudes en la descripción del momento unitivo.

A continuación, la esposa pide ser fortalecida con ungüentos, es decir, ser imperturbable en el bien, y que sus virtudes sean confirmadas, ya que el ungüento significa metafóricamente la virtud, pues ésta impide el mal olor de los vicios.³⁸ Gregorio se pregunta por qué la esposa pide que el techo de su casa sea adornado con manzanas, y formula la hipótesis de que las manzanas son las virtudes, pues las ramas del manzano nacen hacia arriba. Y, precisando un poco más, añade que las manzanas significan el Verbo, pues la participación de éste en la carne y en la sangre está simbolizada por los colores blanco y rojo de las manzanas; y que ver hacia arriba significa ser instruido por las enseñanzas evangélicas para seguir avanzando hasta el cielo, es decir, ver a Cristo y aprender de él todas las virtudes, como la mansedumbre, la humildad, la bondad, la imperturbabilidad, el perdón de los enemigos, la bondad con los que ofenden, el responder al mal con el bien, el autodomínio, la pureza, la magnanimidad y el rechazo de toda vanagloria y de todo engaño.³⁹

35 Cf. *Cant* I (GNO VI 39,10–11).

36 Cf. *Cant* III,IV (GNO VI 88–89,106). En el primer caso se trata de la percepción por medio del olfato de la presencia del esposo y en el segundo de la visión del esposo.

37 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 120–123).

38 Cf. A. Cortesi, *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nissa*, 171–203, quien recuerda que la imagen se relaciona con la unción sacramental con el “myron” (185–188), y traza a lo largo del capítulo un itinerario espiritual, que culmina con la participación en el sacrificio de Cristo y en la recepción del óleo con el que María lo unge para la sepultura (Cf. *Cant* III [GNO VI 92,8–16]).

39 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 123–127).

El alma prosigue con sus peticiones. Desea en primer lugar que la virtud sea fortalecida en ella. El alma como yegua evitó con las virtudes el mal olor de las ranas que golpearon a los egipcios,⁴⁰ y el alma como amiga del Verbo vio las vigas de cedro del techo como virtudes firmes con las que se construye el edificio del alma cristiana.⁴¹ Quizá hay que buscar la novedad de esta etapa en la presencia de la caridad. En segundo lugar, pide que la presencia del esposo en ella se haga más clara e intensa por la imitación de las virtudes de Cristo. Desea por tanto una unión con Cristo superior a la descrita por medio del aroma⁴² o de la madera,⁴³ pues Cristo y sus virtudes evangélicas son ahora más explícitos, pero no es sólo alcanzado, sino sólo deseado.

La esposa clama a continuación que está herida por la caridad. Gregorio recuerda que Dios es caridad, y deduce que es Dios quien ha herido a la esposa; que la flecha que envía Dios es el Hijo unigénito, con quien entran en la esposa el Padre y el Espíritu Santo. La esposa afirma a continuación que el esposo la toma, poniendo la mano izquierda bajo su cabeza y la derecha en su cintura; describe así el abrazo del esposo como la empuñadura del arco por el arquero, que con la mano izquierda toma el arco, y apunta la flecha, y con la izquierda tiende la cuerda. Dios pone su mano izquierda bajo la cabeza porque nos apunta hacia el cielo para lanzarnos hacia allí, pero con su mano derecha nos toma de la cintura porque nos une a Él haciéndonos participar en su vida.⁴⁴

El alma se siente amada por Dios, pero al mismo tiempo impulsada a ascender a una mayor perfección. Gregorio describe con esta imagen la idea del progreso que debe buscar el alma, indicando así que la perfección alcanzada no es el punto de llegada, sino sólo término de una etapa, a la que deben seguir otras. La esposa que habla así, en efecto, mejora sin cesar, y Gregorio la alaba.⁴⁵

Después la esposa pide a las hijas de Jerusalén que se comprometan con un juramento a acrecentar la caridad hasta que en cumplimiento de la voluntad de Dios se salven todos los hombres, es decir, invita a las almas a alcanzar la perfección, creciendo en virtud y en caridad. Pone por testigos de la promesa a las potencias y las energías del campo. Gregorio considera que el campo es el mundo, pues está sometido al devenir como éste; que la potencia no puede ser

40 Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 77): obsérvese la reiteración del sustantivo “hedor” (δυσωδίαν).

41 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 110): se repite incluso el verbo “conservarse” (διασώζουσαι).

42 Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 89–90).

43 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 109).

44 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 127–129).

45 Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 115,3; 119,13; 127,15).

algo terreno, sino que ha de referirse a la naturaleza angélica, pues la Escritura se refiere a ella con el término “potencias”, y da el mismo sentido a “energías”. Por tanto, concluye, la esposa pide que el juramento se realice por los ángeles, que confirman con su estabilidad perenne la firmeza de la vida virtuosa, y prefiguran la estabilidad y la pureza escatológicas. Por ello, la esposa pide a las discípulas del maestro que se comprometan a acrecentar su caridad sin cesar, y a vivir la pureza angélica también en la tierra.⁴⁶

Bajo el nombre de hijas de Jerusalén se encuentran las almas discípulas del maestro. La esposa les pide que participen en su esfuerzo por crecer en caridad continuamente. El plazo termina cuando se cumpla la voluntad de Dios, que consiste en que todos se salven. La esposa difunde el bien que está recibiendo, invitando a participar en su ascensión. Se percibe el paralelo con la transmisión a los demás de la imagen de Dios con el espejo de la propia alma,⁴⁷ y con la manifestación de la virtud interna con las buenas obras.⁴⁸ Como en las etapas anteriores,⁴⁹ Gregorio recuerda la necesidad de vivir la pureza.

5 Conclusión

El análisis precedente del texto permite responder a la pregunta sobre el valor programático de la tríada yegua – amiga – hermana. El desarrollo espiritual descrito no se deja encerrar dentro de un progreso por las fases purgativa, contemplativa y de unión con Cristo que Gregorio vincula en *Cant IV*⁵⁰ con los tres elementos de la tríada, sino que es más rico: en cada una de las tres fases puede percibirse un progreso similar, que parte de la purificación, pasa por el enriquecimiento de la contemplación, y llega a una mayor identificación con Cristo – donde se alude a la pureza – que se desborda y difunde en los demás.⁵¹ Puede resumirse esta cuádruple estructura así:

46 Cf. *Cant IV* (GNO VI 129–135).

47 Cf. *Cant III* (GNO VI 90).

48 Cf. *Cant IV* (GNO VI 112).

49 Cf. *Cant III*; *IV* (GNO VI 79; 111).

50 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 115).

51 F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 285–287, niega que el Niseno describa la vida interior basándose en tres vías, y que combina de formas diversas iluminación, purificación y unión. Pensamos que hay cierta persistencia de este esquema, quizá por exigencias de la psicología humana.

	yegua	amiga	hermana
purificación	<i>Cant III</i> (GNO VI 70–82)	<i>Cant IV</i> (GNO VI 100–104)	<i>Cant IV</i> (GNO VI 116–119)
contemplación	<i>Cant III</i> (GNO VI 83–93)	<i>Cant IV</i> (GNO VI 105–107)	<i>Cant IV</i> (GNO VI 119–120)
configuración a Cristo	<i>Cant III</i> (GNO VI 95–98)	<i>Cant IV</i> (GNO VI 107–111)	<i>Cant IV</i> (GNO VI 120–127)
difusión de la gracia	<i>Cant III</i> (GNO VI 90)	<i>Cant IV</i> (GNO VI 111–112)	<i>Cant IV</i> (GNO VI 129–135)

Gregorio no impone a rajatabla el esquema: el texto de *Cant* le sugiere también otros comentarios; las virtudes desbordan el esquema, al aparecer unas veces en el momento de la purificación y otras en la fase de identificación con Cristo. La difusión de la gracia ocupa un puesto anómalo en la primera etapa.

Con todo, indicar la existencia de este plan de conjunto permite percibir cuán delicadamente Gregorio introduce matices que trazan la línea progresiva. La purificación segunda es descrita como la repetición del colado del oro, que los orfebres no realizan una sola vez, sino cuantas sea necesario. La primera contemplación de Cristo consiste en que se capta tan sólo su aroma en las propias virtudes, en la segunda es ya percibido visualmente con la ayuda del Espíritu Santo, y en la tercera se contempla incluso su obra redentora, no sin el ansia de alcanzar una ulterior contemplación: la de la casa del vino. La primera configuración con Cristo consiste en ver brotar en sí la uva en flor, la segunda es la participación en la unión entre la Iglesia esposa y Cristo esposo hecha posible por la asunción de la humanidad por el Verbo en la encarnación, y se manifiesta en unas virtudes firmes, y la tercera ya está caracterizada por la caridad, pero la esposa manifiesta el deseo de una identificación más intensa. La difusión de la gracia recibida consiste primero en el buen testimonio de las obras, y en la última etapa en una llamada a crecer sin pausa en caridad.

Bibliografía

- Cortesi, A. *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei cantici di Gregorio di Nissa. Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale*, Roma 2000.
- Daniélou, J. *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1954.

Dünzl, F. *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993.

Maspero, G. “Cant”, en: L.F. Mateo-Seco, G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 120–125.

Norris Jr., R.A. *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012.

The Divine Names and Their Use in Gregory of Nyssa's *In Canticum Canticorum*

Georgios D. Panagopoulos

In a passage of the 3rd Homily of *Cant* St. Gregory provides us with an allegorical account of the verses.¹ It is exactly this statement that I'm going to use as a starting point of my analysis: "I have likened you, my close one, to my horse among the chariots of Pharaoh. Why are your cheeks made beautiful like a dove's, your neck like circlets? We will make you likenesses of gold with silver studs, until the king is in his bed". After having compared the soul, that has been purified by the virtues, to the horse, he added that the horse has firstly to be adorned in order to receive the King, namely Christ, as his rider.² Then he moves on to explain the deeper meaning of the phrase "*likenesses of gold with silver studs*", which has been imposed by the grooms and attendants to the Bride in order to turn the horse to a bed for the King. Gregory writes:

The underlying meaning we detect here is this: even though it seems to exhibit an understanding that is noble and worthy of God, all teaching about the ineffable Nature amounts to likenesses of gold, not gold itself. For it is not possible to set out with accuracy the Good that transcends our conception of it. Even though there was a certain Paul who, in paradise, was initiated into things unspeakable, and even though he heard unutterable words, his intuitions concerning God remain inexpressible, for he asserts that the words for these intuitions cannot be spoken (cf. 2 Cor 12.3–6). Hence it is that teachers who provide us with fair thoughts relating to the mysteries are quite unable to articulate what they are with respect to their nature. Rather they say, "radiance of [...] glory", "stamp of the substance" (Heb 1.3), "form of God" (Phil 2.6), "Word in the beginning", "Word divine" (Jn 1.1). To us who have not seen that treasure, all these expressions seem like the gold of that treasure, but to those who are able to look up toward the Truth, it is *likenesses of gold*, and not gold, that makes itself seen in between the delicate markings of silver. Silver means a verbal act of signifying, as when the Scripture says, "The tongue of a righteous

1 Ct 1.9–12.

2 *Cant* III (GNO VI 83,7–84,1–7; tr. Norris).

person is silver tried in fire" (Pr 10.20). What is conveyed, therefore, by these words is this: that the divine Nature transcends the mind's grasp. Our thought concerning it is a likeness or image of what we seek, for it does not manifest the form of that which no one has seen or can see. Rather, it sketches darkly, in a mirror and in an enigma, a reflection of what we seek that comes to birth in our souls on the basis of some conjecture. All speech, however, that refers to such intuitions has the function of some indivisible mark, being unable to make clear what the mind intends. Thus all our thinking is inferior to the divine understanding, and every explanatory word of speech seems to be an abbreviated tracery mark that is unable to embrace the breadth of the act of understanding. Hence Paul says that the soul that is led by such intuitions to awareness of things that cannot be grasped must bring the Nature that transcends all intellect within herself by faith alone. And this is what the friends of the Bridegroom say: "We shall make for you, O soul, rightly likened to the horse, certain manifestations and likenesses of truth (for this is the function of the *silver* of words: the things people say seem to be sparklike embers that cannot with accuracy express the intuition they carry), but you, when you have received these likenesses, shall become a dwelling place and a servant by faith of the One who is coming to recline within you by dwelling within you. You shall both be his throne and become his home".³

It is not possible to cover all the aspects this really important passage exhibits. Thus, in what follows I'll be concentrating myself in following issues: a) the idea of two kinds of God's Knowledge that underlies, as I suggest, the whole passage and provides it with meaningful coherence and b) the names' function concerning God as it can be inquired by taking into consideration parallel Gregorian passages both from *Cant* and other tractates.

a The Idea of Two Kinds of God's Knowledge

First of all a preliminary remark: It has been already accurately pointed out⁴ that it was Origen who in his *Commentary to the Song* thought of the gold as symbolizing the incorporeal natures in contrast to silver that stay for the power of speech and reason. Gregory's interpretation appears more radical insofar for

3 *Cant* (GNO VI 85,10–87,17; tr. Norris 95).

4 R.A. Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of the Songs* (Writings from the Graeco-Roman World 13), Atlanta (GA) 2012, 95, footnote 19.

him the gold means the infinite and incomprehensible divine Nature, whereas the likeness of gold symbolizes the whole Church teaching, even though it seems to exhibit an understanding that is noble and worthy of God. According to Gregory, but also to the two other Cappadocians, the divine essence exceeds all the human meanings, concepts and connotative function of speech. The divine nature transcends radically all knowledge that human beings could attain by whatever means.⁵ Thus Gregory proceeds to a distinction between the thinking (διάνοια), which is the *likeness of Gold* as inferior to the divine nature, and the meaning of the verbal utterance, which is likened with the silver because it “seems to be an abbreviated tracery mark that is unable to embrace the breadth of the act of understanding”. Yet Gregory follows Origen in taking the phrase “ὁμοιώματα χρυσίου” as meaning “things that image gold” and not “things made of gold”. That means the likeness of gold is no Gold.

The more this insight is admittedly fitting to Gregory’s theological teaching, the more radical appears in his thought the distinction between the uncreated nature, namely the Triune God, on the one side, and the created cosmos, on the other.⁶ This distinction, which takes up a structural role in the Cappadocian theology, underlies an epistemological one, which Gregory implicit presupposes in the passage of *Cant* III⁷ — a work of the last years of his life — and explicit expounds in a text from *De beatitudinibus*, one of his early works, if we trust Danielou:⁸

5 *Cant* I (GNO VI 36,16–37,7); *Cant* III (GNO VI 86,12–87,8); *Cant* XI (GNO VI 337,7–9; 339,6–8); *Cant* XII (GNO VI 357,4–6, where Gregory remarks that the magnitude of the divine nature transcends every “cataleptic impression and power”); *Eun* I 373; 376–377 (GNO I 137,4–6.25–29); *Eun* II 102; 105 (GNO I 256,23–25; 257,21–25); *Eun* III/5 53–54; III/9 41 (GNO II 179,23–27; 279,18–19); *Eust* (GNO III/1 14,7–17); *Eccl* VII (GNO V 406,7–10; 415,17–20); *Vit Moys* I, 47–49; II, 165; II, 177 (GNO VII/1 22,16–23; 88,1–5; 92,8–12).

6 For the two alternative ways in which Gregory expounds to this distinction see X. Battlo, “Une evolution de Gregoire? La distinction *κτιστόν* / *ἄκτιστον* du CE I au CE III”, in: J. Leemans—M. Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa Contra Eunomium III. An English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa* (Leuven, 14–17 September 2010), Leiden-Boston 2014, 489–499; see also D.L. Balás, *Μετουσία Θεοῦ. Man’s Participation in God’s perfections According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*, Rome 1966, 34–53; Ἡλ.Δ. Μουστσοῦλας, *Γρηγόριος Νύσσης. Βίος, συγγράμματα, διδασκαλία*, Ἀθήναι 1997, 355–356.

7 *Cant* III (GNO III/4 85,10–87,17).

8 J. Danielou, “La chronologie des œuvres de Grégoire de Nysse”, *Studia Patristica* 7 (1966) 160–161; Balas, “Gregory of Nyssa”, in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Berlin-New York 1985, 181; I. Pochoshajew, *Gregory of Nyssa, De Beatitudinibus IV, Ad Ablabium and Adversus Macedonianos* (Patrologia. Beiträge zum Studium der Kirchenväter xx), Frankfurt am Main 2008, 25; E.D. Moutsoulas, “Le sens de la justice dans la quatrième Homélie sur les Béatitudes de saint Grégoire de Nysse”, in: H.R. Drobner—A. Viciano, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beati-*

The Lord said that the blessing being consists not in knowing something about God but in possessing God within you.⁹

The same position reappears in *Eccl*, this time a work of Gregory's maturity.¹⁰ Drawing on wording of the latter evidence one could point to this distinction as one between a God's knowledge through thoughts (διὰ λογισμῶν) on the one side and a God's knowledge by virtue of immediate grace experience on the other side. In other words, it is accurate to speak of a mediate rational knowledge of God, which, according to a clear evidence of Gregory in 11th homily in *Cant* and in *Beat* consists only in the knowledge of the existence of God gained through sensing God's wise activity in the whole world, as well as His beneficial one in our life,¹¹ and a charismatic one, on the other side, which according to several Gregorian texts, is thought of as a real union with God gained by the grace as a light's vision to those who, as a result of the purification of their heart "by removal of the material gloom from the soul's eyes", can see within themselves as in a mirror¹² "the light like radiances of the divine nature" (τὰ φωτοειδῆ τῆς θείας φύσεως ἀπαυγάσματα).¹³ In this second case we have obviously to do with partaking of God, the so called *μετουσία Θεοῦ*, a term which Gregory actually prefers to use, particularly in *Cant*,¹⁴ in order to describe the graced and ineffable state of the deification, since, in contrast to Athanasios the Great and Gregory of Nazianz, he appears quite reluctant to employ the very term of *theosis* (θέωσις).¹⁵

tudes. *An English Version with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the Eighth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa* (Paderborn, 14–18 September 1998), Leiden 2000; cf. S. Douglass, "De Beatitudinibus", in: L.F.M. Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden-Boston 2009, 99–100, where more views can be found.

- 9 *Beat* VI (GNO VII/2, 142,13–15): "Ὅτι οὐ τὸ γινῶναι τι περὶ Θεοῦ μακάριον ὁ Κύριος εἰναί φησιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐν ἑαυτῷ σχεῖν τὸν Θεόν; cf. *Eccl* III (GNO V 306,3–9).
- 10 This fact allows us to speak of an insight that held sway throughout the literary activity of bishop of Nyssa. Besides, the distinction appears clearly already in the first tractate of Gregory, the *De virginitate* (*Virg* X 1 [GNO VIII/1 288–289; SC 119, 368–370]).
- 11 *Beat* VI (GNO VII/2, 141,6–15).
- 12 Cf. *Virg* XI 5 (GNO VIII/1 296; SC 119, 392–394). For the motive of mirror see A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition. From Plato to Denys*, Oxford 1981, 79–80; 91–93.
- 13 *Beat* VI (GNO VII/2, 144,11–12); cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 90,10–18); *An et res* (GNO III/3 25–27): οὕτως ἐν τῇ βραχύτητι τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεως τῶν ἀφράστων ἐκείνων τῆς θεότητος ιδιωμάτων αἱ εἰκόναί ἐκλάμπουσιν [...].
- 14 *Cant* V; VI (GNO VI 158,16; 174,6–7) cf. F. Mann (ed.), *Lexikon Gregorianum. Wörterbuch zu den Schriften Gregors von Nyssa*, Bd. VI, Leiden—Boston 2007, s.v. *μετουσία*.
- 15 See J.A. McGuckin, "The Strategic Adaptation of Deification in the Cappadocians", in: M.J. Christensen—J.A. Wittung (eds.), *Partakers of Divine Nature. The History and Develop-*

Let us first dwell for a while on the second kind of knowledge, the charismatic possession of God: For Gregory true and real knowledge of God is the vision of His light like radiances in an ineffable union with Him. It is the so called deification (theosis). It is thru that the very term “θέωσις” doesn’t appear frequently in Gregory’s writings; nevertheless the vocabulary relevant to “theosis” is quite vast and its analysis exceeds the aim of this communication.¹⁶ What is important for us in this context is Gregory’s position that partaking of God neither is to be identified with participation in God’s essence, nor conveys any kind of knowing or comprehending of God’s essential being. The charismatic union of God consists in a graced partaking of God’s energies (Gregory often employs the term: “the properties that are conceived to be around the divine nature”),¹⁷ but no way of God’s essence.¹⁸ Gregory allows himself in the 2nd homily *In Cant* to claim that the “whole God takes up residence” within the purified believer;¹⁹ he talks several times of partaking of Holy Spirit, participation in the divinity (θεότης),—an issue dominant in the 3rd Homily *In Cant*²⁰—the Kingdom and the Glory; he refers also to the vision of the divine

ment of Deification in the Christian Traditions, Michigan 2007, 104; N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford 2009, 232; cf. Γ. Φλωροβский, *Восточные Отцы Церкви*, Moscow 2005, 202.

16 “Μετουσία”, “ἀνάκρασις”, “ἔνωσις”, “συναφθῆναι τῇ θεῇ φύσει”, “ἰδεῖν τὸν Θεόν”. Cf. M. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith. Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence* (Oxford Christian Studies), Oxford 2007, *passim*.

17 See inter alia *Eun* III/4 3; III/4 34 (GNO II 186,14–15; 197,27–198,1–2); *Or dom* II (GNO VII/2 23,15–18).

18 Cf. W. Volker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, Wiesbaden 1955, 279; D. Balás, *Μετουσία Θεού*, 158–159; L. Ayres, *Nicaea and his Legacy. An Approach to Forth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, Oxford 2006, 353–354, who, following M.R. Barnes (“Eunomius of Cyzicus and Gregory of Nyssa: Two Traditions of Transcendent Causality”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 52 [1998] 59–87), argued for a Plotinian origin of this Gregorian insight. It is however worth noting that, unlike Plotinus (*Enn* 5. 1), Gregory talks not only of divine “powers” but also of divine properties. That is to say, the metaphysical sequence: essence, power, activity, is by no means a constitutive element of Gregorian theology. The fluidity of Gregory’s language has been accurately pointed out by A. Torrance, “Precedents for Palamas’ Essence-Energies Theology in the Cappadocian Fathers”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009) 65.

19 *Cant* II (GNO VI 68,15–16).

20 *Cant* III (GNO VI 71,5–8): ὁ δὲ νῦν λόγος τῆς θεότητός ἐστι μετουσία αὐτοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου διὰ τῆς ἰδίας φωνῆς μεταδιδόντος τῷ ἀκούοντι τῆς ἀκηράτου δυνάμεως τὴν κοινωνίαν. It is worth stressing that for Gregory the union of man with God by participation in God’s “deity”—which “deity” according to Gregory denotes an activity considered around the divine nature (cf. *An et res* [GNO III/3 78–79]; *Eust* [GNO III/1 8,3–20]; *Or dom* II [GNO VII/2 23,12–21]; *Beat* III; v [GNO VII/2 104,20–21; 124,11–14]; *Perf* [GNO VIII/1 205,6–9])—is to be thought of against a prominently christological background. Cf. R.J. Kees, *Die Lehre von der Oikonomia Gottes in der Oratio Catechetica Gregors von Nyssa*, Leiden 1995, 182 ff.

light in virtue of the incarnation of Christ.²¹ In *Cant* he identifies also this light with that one shown to the three disciples in Christ's Transfiguration,²² a divine light which elsewhere he takes to be the same with the Kingdom of God.²³ Nevertheless the bishop of Nyssa never allows to himself even a hint to something like a partaking of God's essential being.²⁴

For this reason Gregory emphasize the inappropriateness of all names invented of human beings in order to reveal or comprehend the very reality of the ineffable Good. Whatever name humans might invent, they still will be falling short of grasping the divine thru:

For this reason, she contrives all sorts of word meanings to signify the unutterable Good, but every expressive power that belongs to rational speech falls short and is exposed as being less than the truth.²⁵

That is why in a crucial for our question passage Gregory points out that the true name of God transcends the rational content of all ordinary names so far as it is identical with the relation of human soul with the God in an inexpressible manner. This is to say that the true name of God is not to be thought of; it is to be experienced, beyond the intellectual meaning of words and statements, as ineffable goodness or love in the mystical union with God by grace:

Speak to me, you whom my soul loves—for so shall I name you, since your name is above every name and cannot be spoken or grasped by any rational nature. Therefore your name, which declares your goodness, is my soul's attitude toward you.²⁶

21 *Inst* (GNO VIII/1 48,1–11); *Vit Moys* II (GNO VII/1 42,1–9; 120,5–18; 124,4–7).

22 *Cant* IV; XI (GNO VI 104,329, cf. 438).

23 *Steph* II (GNO X/1 103,19–23).

24 It is tempting here to put forward my disagreement with the view propounded recently by Laird (*Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith. Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence*, Oxford 2007, *passim*), according to which Gregory sees the faith as a supranoetical, non discursive faculty of the soul, which in the zenith of the apophatic approach grasps in union somehow the divine essence. Laird seems to oversee that the term divine nature is not always identical with divine essence and, besides, that Gregory never speaks of partaking of the divine essence. It is true that God comes to indwell in the poured human soul by virtue of its faith; but to suggest that by the grasp of faith something like a union with the divine essence is conveyed to human amounts to underestimate the radicalism of divine essence's apophaticism that held sway throughout both Gregorian and Cappadocian theology.

25 *Cant* XII (GNO VI 357,20–358,1–3; tr. Norris 379); cf. *Cant* VI (GNO VI 181,19–21); *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 379,11–13).

26 *Cant* II (GNO VI 61,13–17; tr. Norris 69): ἀπάγγειλόν μοι ὃν ἡγάπησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου. Οὕτω γάρ

Now I come to focus my attention to the other kind of knowledge, the mediate or intellectual one. Gregory have no doubts about the soteriological importance of the mediate knowledge of God's existence through reasoning of the marvelous things and the harmony of the creation, since it is about the second stage in humans ascent towards union with God, the first being the ascetical purification and the third the infinite growth in union with God. It is of course true that he takes as granted that even the pagan philosophers could attain such a knowledge by means of a scientific observation of the world's harmonic structure,²⁷ nevertheless he makes in several texts a point of the importance of seeing God's presence in the world in virtue of a graced struggle against the sin and the passions.²⁸

Yet Gregory refuses decisively to assign to the Church speech a metaphysical functioning. *Names, words, and concepts are truth indicators in the process of salvation, but they are not the Truth itself.* They assume a crucial role both in pastoral care of believers and in the sacramental life of the Church.²⁹ Yet they aren't gold: they are likeness of gold or dew drops, signs of God's will (*ἐνδείξεις εἰς τοῦ θεοῦ θελήματος*). This is particularly to be attested in *Beat*: Gregory sees the beatitudes of Christ ("blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy") as a ladder stretching from earth to the heaven. Precisely because God stays at the top of this ladder "participation (*μετουσία*) in the beatitudes means nothing else than communion (*κοινωνία*) with God".³⁰ This is to say that by observing faithfully the commandments of Christ, which are conveyed to us in terms of concepts and verbal utterances, one is enabled to participate in God's energies. But, nevertheless, human utterances are not to be identified with the invisibles mysteries of the ineffable nature.

This insight is gained by the grace of God only to those who in virtue of faith and purification of the soul's eyes entered to the place that is beyond any words and comprehension, like St. Paul³¹ or David. As Gregory says in 10th homily in *Cant*,³² but also in his first work, *De virginitate*,³³ that, since the knowledge of the uncreated nature in the all transcending union with it by grace has nothing

σε κακτονομάζω, ἐπειδὴ τὸ ὄνομά σου ὑπὲρ πᾶν ἐστὶ ὄνομα καὶ πάσῃ φύσει λογικῇ ἀφραστόν τε καὶ ἀχώρητον. Οὐκοῦν ὄνομά σοι ἐστὶ γνωριστικὸν τῆς σῆς ἀγαθότητος ἢ τῆς ψυχῆς μου περὶ σέ σχέσης; cf. *Eun* III/6 4–5 (GNO II 187,9–11).

27 *Beat* VI (GNO VII/2 141–142).

28 See *Virg* XI (GNO VIII/1 292; SC 119, 382) with references to Plotinus.

29 *Eun* III/9 56; III/9 57 (GNO II 285,8–10; 17–18).

30 *Beat* V (GNO VII/2, 124,13–14).

31 *Cant* III (GNO VI 87,17–88,6).

32 *Cant* X (GNO 309,5–9).

33 *Virg* X,1 (GNO VIII/1 288–290; SC 119, 368–374).

in common with any knowledge available to the created reason, David correctly declared that “every man is a liar”, meaning by this, that every one who try to convey in language the wordless light is in fact a liar not as a result of hate toward the truth but of the weakness of the speech.³⁴

But what is the cause of this weakness? Why the true knowledge of God is identical only with the possession of God, namely the deification, and not also with the intellectual one that can be conveyed to us in concepts and words? Gregory gives the answer based on the radical distinction between the uncreated and the created nature in a fascinating passage from the 8th homily *In Ecclesiasten*, where the theological insight get masterfully combined with a critique of human cognitive faculties.

It is about the Stoic theory of the so called cataleptic impression (καταληπτική φαντασία). In the passage under question³⁵ Gregory moves on to contest the epistemological authority of the “cataleptic impression” when applied on the level of theology. According to the worth trusting account of Diogenes Laertios, the Stoics assigned to an impression the quality to be apprehensive (cataleptic), if it derives from an existent object, represents it accurately and is imprinted in the sensorial. As Hankinson makes clear, “cataleptic impressions are made so by the essential natures of the object they represent” and so they draw by themselves the assent of the cognitive subject.³⁶ Gregory doesn’t enter in details concerning the Stoic theory and I’m inclining to believe, he had not gained a deep insight in Stoic argumentation. Nonetheless he seems to be aware of the onslaught which the main opponents of the Stoics, the philosophers of the Academic Skepticism, had made against the epistemological value of the cataleptic impression.

Taking into consideration evidences also from other Gregorian writings I would summarize Gregory’s point of view as following: Although he doesn’t actually contest the character of cataleptic impression as a kind of knowledge useful for human life,³⁷ he suggests that it is not about an apprehensive knowledge. It can be true, but this does not mean that it provides us with the knowledge of the object per se.

34 It would be advisable to see Gregory’s doctrine in comparison with that of Philo of Alexandria. See F. Calabi, *God’s Acting, Man’s Acting. Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria*, Leiden—Boston 2008, 90–102 and *passim*.

35 *Eccl* VII (GNO V 411,4–414,13).

36 See all references in R.J. Hankinson, “Stoic Epistemology”, in: B. Inwood (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, Cambridge 2003, 61 and 70.

37 As a matter of fact he accepts it as a practical and then as an epistemological criterion, as one can infer from several passages: *Eun* II 401 (GNO I 343,20–25); also *Eun* II 117 (GNO I

Now, on the level of the theological reasoning Gregory invokes the radical distinction between the uncreated and created nature and rules out any possibility to comprehend the divine nature by means of “cataleptic impression”. In order to prove this statement he goes on to sketch out an account concerning the nature and the functioning of human sense faculties which, admittedly, seems to announce the theory of the specific sense energies propounded by Johannes Müller in 19th century’s Germany:³⁸ Gregory stress that every created being sees only toward the akin being according to their nature.³⁹ Moreover, the faculty of our sense organs cannot transit to the state of another, because each one remains in its own naturally operation. Hence neither the eye is in position to accomplish the function of the hearing, nor the touch talks, nor the hearing fulfil the role of the taste and so on.⁴⁰ As a result, we are told in *De opif. hominis*, that not seldom we acquire the knowledge of a thing by the fact that it get multiply divided according to our senses faculties.⁴¹

Although I’m not sure that Gregory had a concrete text before him when he was writing these sentences, it would be notwithstanding of great interest to look for the eventual sources Gregory had drawn on. Certainly one might suggest the view that the “cataleptic impression” represents a kind of knowledge useful for our every day life but certainly not identical with a comprehension of the things could remind us to a similar one propounded by philosophers of the Middle Academy.⁴² At any rate, it must be pointed out that, whereas the related dispute between Sceptics and Stoics was focused on the question whether it is possible to discern a true impression from a false one which, nevertheless, is

260,10–13): διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου στοιχεῖα τῇ μὲν αἰσθήσει τοσοῦτον γινώσκομεν, ὅσον τὸ ἀφ’ ἐκάστου χρησίμων πρὸς τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν δέχεσθαι, τὸν δὲ τῆς οὐσίας αὐτῶν λόγον οὔτε ἐμάθομεν οὔτε τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι ζημίαν ποιούμεθα. A similar view seem to share also saint Gregory of Nazianzus (*Oratio* 28,21;29 [SC 250,142;166]) and Basil of Caesarea (*Eun* 1 12 [SC 299,214]).

38 See E. Friedell, *Kulturgeschichte der Neuzeit. Die Krisis der europäischen Seele von der schwarzen Pest bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, Vol. 2, München 2002, 994–995.

39 *Ecll* VII (GNO V 411,14–16).

40 *Cant* XIV (GNO VI 412,1–6).

41 *Op hom* X (PG 44 153).

42 One could refer here to Arcesilaus’ and particularly Carneades’ “practical criterion” of truth. See inter alia V. Brochard, *Les Sceptiques grecs* Paris 2002, 145–150; R.J. Hankinson, *The Sceptics*, London—New York 1998, 89–90 and 112–113, who remarks: “The Stoics are Essential Realist, viewing their system of logical sign-inference as a means of penetrating to the essential heart of things from their phenomenal appearances. The Academics [...] rejecting such claims, are Essential Sceptics”. My analysis suggests that, although Gregory of Nyssa makes use of basic stoic terminological elements as well as stoic epistemological insights by joining, not at least, their empiricist attitude, he nevertheless denies their Essential Realism. Whether he does this by drawing on skeptical arguments is a question that exceeds the limits of this paper and perhaps deserves a particular study.

the spitting image of the first (it is about the sceptical “argument of aparlaxia”), Gregory’s critique relies on an analysis of the cognitive subject. In any case one can realize the way in which Gregory goes on in order to underpin his theological insight.

b Concept Formation and Names’ Functioning Concerning God

It is impossible to understand Gregory’s theory of mind and language without taking into account his epistemological ideas. The Stoic-aristotelian background of Gregory’s epistemology seems to have been quite unnoticed by some modern scholars. Gregory, staying in the same line with his brother Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, gives an outline of the manner in which human beings acquire knowledge of the things, according to which concepts are the result of mind’s activity on sense data. In what concern the relation between words, concept and external things several passages from the Gregorian writings, and particularly of the *Eun*,⁴³ allow us to maintain that Gregory had adhered to an empiristic epistemology, according to which *the utter sounds are signs invented by humans, through which we refer to the external things by signifying concepts shaped in our soul in virtue of sense perception*.

Up to this point we have to do with an epistemological insight owing his origin to the Aristotelian *De Interpretatione* and being summarized in the renowned phrase *verba significant res mediantibus conceptis*,⁴⁴ which was destined to meet success till the time of Bacon, Hobbes and Lock. Yet Neoplatonists made a point of insisting to the fact, that in order for the human being to be capable of collecting the universal from the common traits distributed to the individuals, “they must project the universal that are present in the soul in virtue of his essence”.⁴⁵ There were surely also Neoplatonists who, committed to the endeavor of harmonizing the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle, appear to

43 *Eun* II 144–182 (GNO I 267,14–277,27). An obviously different view advanced Philo of Alexandria, *De cherubim*, 56; *Legum allegoriarum*, II 15; *De Opificio mundi*, 6–39, 150; it is yet to be noticed that Philo distinguishes carefully between names of created things and divine names which designate quite improperly God, who completely transcends the grasp of human mind. See Calabi, *God’s Acting Man’s Acting. Tradition and Philosophy in Philo pf Alexandria*, 92–93.

44 The phrase is attributed, at least in the context of the *Categories*, by Olympiodoros and Helias to Iamblichos: see A.C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*, Oxford 1998, 50; cf. R. Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–600AD*, Vol. 3: *Logic and Metaphysics*, London 2004, 205.

45 Hermeias, *In Phaidr.* 171, 8, 25 apud R. Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–*

accept both Aristotle's empirically gained concepts and Plato's innates ones, but they also held to the Platonic innatism, that is the soul's faculty to recollect the intelligible Forms through the universal innate in it. Although Gregory doesn't offer such an explicit empiristic account of shaping concepts (ἐπινόια) as his brother Basil does,⁴⁶ he nevertheless seems to stay in the same line.⁴⁷ It is worth stressing that the bishop of Nyssa rules out any possibility to understand human soul and mind in term of Stoic materialism; moreover he illustrates the nature of the soul with a language full of Platonic reminiscences.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, in his writings there is not even a hint to the need for the mind to possess within itself the form of what investigates. Concept formation appears to take place in virtue of our mental ability to generalize the particular sense data, without presupposing either a type of Platonic innatism or an Aristotelian intellectus agens. Given, moreover, that Gregory doesn't thing of human mind as a mechanism passively accepting the sense data,⁴⁹ it could be justified to suggest that he has committed himself to a kind of empiricist epistemology, which displays undoubtedly similarities with Stoic theory of knowledge.⁵⁰ It is, of course, not possible to embark at this place on a thorough investigation of this multifaceted issue. Nevertheless a passage from the first Homily of the

600 AD, Vol. 3, 138–139 and 262; cf. also P. Remes, *Neoplatonism*, Stocksfield 2008, 147–149; A. Smith, *Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, London-New York 2004, 9–10.

46 Basil of Cesarea, *Adversus Eunomium* I 6 (SC 299, 184–188); cf. my analysis about the philosophical background of this passage: G.D. Panagopoulos, *Η στωική φιλοσοφία στη Θεολογία του Μ. Βασιλείου*, Athens 2009, 262–288.

47 *Eun* II 181–182 (GNO I 277,7–26).

48 Nevertheless, the doctrine about the divine image and similitude in human beings is not being conceived by Gregory in terms of Greek rationalism. Instead, in several passages of his work he lays stress on the fact “that the divine image in humanity means that human beings possess within themselves the divine perfections” as a gift of participation in God by grace. See *Op hom* V (PG 44, 137; 161; 184); cf. *Cant* II (GNO VI 68,8); *Or cat* (GNO III/4 17,4–18,1–16); *Steph* I (GNO X/1 91); *Virg* XI (GNO VIII/1 296; SC 119, 392–394); hence it is not a pure ontological fact, as it is the case in Plotinus. See McGuckin, “The Strategic adaptation of Deification”, 107; cf. H. Merki, *Ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ. Von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Göttlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Freiburg in der Schweiz 1952, 103; E. Peroli, *Il Platonismo e l'anthropologia filosofica di Gregorio di Nissa. Con particolare riferimento agli influssi di Platone, Plotino e Porfirio*, Milano 1993, 283–284; I. Pochoshajew, *Die Seele bei Plato, Plotin, Porphyri und Gregor von Nyssa. Erörterung des Verhältnisses von Platonismus und Christentum am Gegenstand der menschlichen Seele bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Patrologia. Beiträge zum Studium der Kirchenväter XII), Frankfurt am Main 2002, 139.

49 *Op hom* VI; IX (PG 44 140; 149); cf. A. Bedke, *Anthropologie als Mosaik. Die Aufnahme antiker Philosophie durch Gregor von Nyssa in seiner Schrift De hominis opificio*, Münster 2012, 75–77.

50 For a brief outline of the Stoic empiricism see J. Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind*, London 1994, 86–87.

commentary *In Cant* seems to give support to my suggestion. Gregory is trying to explain that it is impossible to comprehend accurately the limitless divine nature. So he claims:

All the power of concepts, he says, and all the significance of names, cannot attain the nature of the Real itself. On the contrary, it is as if by certain traces (ἰχνῶν) and hints (ἐναυσμάτων) that our reason guesses at the Invisible (ἄδηλον) by way of some analogy based on things it has comprehended; it forms a conjecture about the Incomprehensible.⁵¹

As already H. Langerbeck accurately pointed out, Gregory refers here to the unfortunately not well documented in the extant sources Stoic conception of “demonstration”.⁵² It is about “the epistemology of semeion edeiktikon”, the indicative sign, namely “a type of inference designed to lead us from phenomenal facts to their hidden explanation”.⁵³ Gregory employs in a theological context this type of inference and gives fully the impression of accepting its epistemological value: Once again we attest the empirical starting point of Gregory’s epistemology, in this case shifted on the level of the theological reasoning. An important role is also here reserved to the notion of “analogy”, which according to the evidences was one of the mental operations the Stoics (but also Epicurians) applied in shaping conceptions.⁵⁴ But, nonetheless, Gregory is obviously trying to limit the range of the applicability of the “endeiktikon semeion”. According to Gregory the functioning of the “endeiktikon semeion” is getting at a conjecture of the Incomprehensible, not at any explanation of its being.

We can therefore maintain that at the level of reasoning about the existence of God and his activities toward us Gregory adopts an epistemological model of Stoic-hellenistic origin and simultaneously he modified it by rejecting its eventual metaphysical connotations.

As far as language, and particularly names, goes, Gregory forcefully argues that since we don’t have at our disposal names capable of being accurately at-

51 *Cant* (GNO VI 36/37): ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι ὀνομαστικὴ σημασία [...] ἔκ τινος ἀναλογίας τὸ ἀκατάληπτον; cf. *Infant* (GNO III/2 85–86): μέθοδος ἀποδεικτικὴ τῶν ἀγνοουμένων; *Eccl* II (GNO V 308,17–19); *An et res* (GNO III/3 11–12); cf. Hankinson, “Stoic Epistemology”, 63, 78–79.

52 Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos* VII 140, VIII 245, 374; *PHyp* II 104, 142, 169–170, II 179; see also Iamblichos, *Protrepticus* 116, 21 (tr. Pistelli). As far as saint Basil of Caesarea is concerned see my analysis: Panagopoulos, *Η στωική φιλοσοφία στη Θεολογία του Μ. Βασιλείου*, 297–300.

53 Hankinson, “Stoic Epistemology”, 78–79.

54 Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae*, VII, 53 (Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta II 87); x, 32; cf. A.A. Long—D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 2, Cambridge 1987, 240.

tributed to God's essential being (ὑποκείμενον) we are naming God with help of many names (πολλοῖς ὀνόμασι), each of which points to God (we must not forget, that this means the existence and not the essence of God) through a particular concept about Him shaped as result of different empirical approaches (ἐπιβολή).⁵⁵ So Gregory emphasises against Eunomios the fact that man becomes the author of names (ὀνοματοποιίας) by applying them to God in accordance to what has been appeared (κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον). Our bishop takes care to protect himself from agnosticism by asserting that he doesn't deny any possibility to know something concerning the things around the divine nature.⁵⁶ The same attitude is to be found also in *Eun*⁵⁷ and in a relevant passage from *Ad Eustathium, De Trinitate*, where Gregory once again gives utterance to the main insight of the Cappadocian teaching about God's names:

The divine nature remains in all the invented names ineffable [...]. For in calling God benefactor and judge, good and just and whatever else like that we became aware of a difference of activities, yet through the knowledge of the activities we cannot learn the nature of the agent [...]. Hence it is one thing the essence, in regard of which no one significative concept had been found out, and another thing the meaning of the names concerning its properties, that are used in virtue of an activity.⁵⁸

Gregory is quite clear: Names are product of human inventiveness and they do not convey to us any kind of knowledge of God's essential being. But we can, nonetheless, reach to a mediate intellectual knowledge of God's existence and His various activities (ἐνεργειῶν διαφοράς) through use and understanding of names shaped from sensing God's activity in the world and our life. In order to keep this knowledge unconfused we go on to employ various names, likewise we do with regard to the knowledge of the external things that surround us: We impose to them different names in order to keep the empirical acquired knowledge unconfused. Particularly the common names (προσηγορίαι), including a group of relative names,⁵⁹ denote the divine properties that are being con-

55 *Eun* II 145 (GNO I 267,24–27). Cf. the empirical connotations of the term ἐπιβολή in other Gregory's writings. Differently in Neoplatonic thinkers: Plotinos, *En.* IV 4,4,1; Damascius, *Arch.* 25.

56 *Eun* II 157–158 (GNO I 270,29–31).

57 *Eun* III/5 50–52; III/5 58–59; III/8 10 (GNO II 178,15–179,13; 181,13–24; 242,9–18).

58 *Eust* (GNO III/1 14,16–18); cf. *Eccl* VII (GNO V 415,13–22).

59 See my paper: G.D. Panagopoulos, "Die stoische Gattung des πρὸς τί πως ἔχον in *CE* III 1,

ceived around the divine nature, that is the divine activities (ἐνέργειαι). Gregory says elsewhere that these properties, which on account of the passage from *Ad Eustathium*⁶⁰ mentioned above are not to be identified with the completely ineffable divine essence, exist before the creation of the world, but they begin to be named after the creation of the man as result of a human mental elaboration of sense data supplied by God's activity in the world.⁶¹ According to an other statement Gregory made in *Cant*,⁶² the divine properties have nothing to do with time, place, color, shape, bulk magnitude, interval (diastema), or any other confining name, thing or concept. All the goods that are conceived by our mind to be around "the blessed and eternal nature that transcend every intellect",⁶³ that is the divine nature, runs out to infinity and beyond all limit.⁶⁴ That is, they do not belong to the realm of the created beings. This is to suggest that not only the ungraspable and completely incommunicable divine essence but also the divine activities themselves exceed the intellectual grasping through naming and thinking, although, unlike the essence, they can be denoted by humans in so far they sense God's activity in their live.

It is clear that for Gregory divine names as used in Scripture and in whole teaching and life of the Church do really provide a kind of knowledge about the existence of God insofar he relates himself in his activities (ἐνέργειαι) to the world and our lives. Moreover, Gregory, expressing himself in terms of Hellenistic philosophy of mind, claims that divine names used as terms in a propositional statement, articulated in a manner reminding the Stoic "saybles" (λεκτόν), that is meaningful propositions corresponding to a existing state of

131–134 des Gregors von Nyssa", in: J. Leemans—M. Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa Contra Eunomium III*, 625–642.

60 *Eust* (GNO III/1 14,16–18).

61 *Eun* II 167 (GNO I 273,18–20).

62 *Cant* V (GNO VI 157,14–21).

63 The translation of Richard jr. Norris, *Cant* V (GNO VI 157,14–21; tr. Norris 171): "but every good thing that the mind attributes to it runs out to infinity [...]" (πάν τὸ περὶ αὐτὴν νοούμενον ἀγαθὸν εἰς ἀπειρόν τε καὶ ἀόριστον πρόεισιν) takes the risk to give somehow rise to misunderstandings, since it obscures Gregory's view of the divine properties as eternally existents but not completely identical with God's essence. The quasi standardised Gregorian phrase τὰ περὶ τὴν θείαν φύσιν θεωρούμενα points to this fact and lets no room to turn a statement of existential assertion into a quasi accidental attribution. See *Eun* III/5 56 (GNO II 180,20–23); *Eun* III/5 58 (GNO II 181,19); cf. *Or dom* (GNO VII/2 23): ἡ θεία φύσις [...] ἀγαθότης ἔστιν, ἀγιασμός, ἀγαλίαμα, [...] καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα νενόηται περὶ τὴν θείαν φύσιν; cf. *Beat* (GNO VII/2 83; 104); *Cant* V; XIII; XV (GNO VI 147,381,447–448); *Eccl* VII (GNO V 415,16–416,1); *Or cat* (GNO III/4 17,5–6,26).

64 *Cant* V (GNO VI 157,19–21): Ἡ μακαρία καὶ αἰδιος καὶ πάντα νοῦν ὑπερέχουσα [...] ἀλλὰ πάν τὸ περὶ αὐτὴν νοούμενον ἀγαθὸν εἰς ἀπειρόν τε καὶ ἀόριστον πρόεισιν.

affairs,⁶⁵ can provide an empirical knowledge, but not a comprehension neither of the essential being of the supreme Good nor of its *dynameis* / *energeiai* by themselves.

But the fact that for Gregory the divine names and the whole Church teaching, which is articulated in terms of rational concepts and conveyed in a human language, are not bearers of a comprehensive knowledge of God or of some kind of metaphysical intuitions, doesn't amount to an underestimation of their pastoral and soteriological functioning. In several passages of the Commentary in *Cant* Gregory lays stress to the importance of the scriptural and ecclesiastical speech about God.⁶⁶ The Church teaching, although a likeness of gold, is obviously necessary because it "confers splendour on the horse's appearance, in order that the King may be, not on his seat, but *in his bed*". In the same line, the teaching of Prophets, Evangelists and Apostles, "which Truth drizzle down [...] by way of thoughts that are subtle and only just discernible",⁶⁷ are likened with drops of dew in comparison with the authentic Truth.

Last but not least it is worth referring to two related evidences of *Eun*, where Gregory makes clear that the Church teaching, with its concepts and words, is a mean by which the "kindly dispensation (philanthropic *oikonomia*) of the Holy Spirit conveys to us the divine mysteries". So the Holy Spirit, making accessible to us his teaching about things beyond our understanding, offers the teaching about the ineffable things through conceptions available to us.⁶⁸ Words and concepts are not the truth but truth indicators in the long ascetical process toward God, where not only the Church teaching but also the "through faith love for the ascetical struggles" assume a crucial pastoral-therapeutical role. A pedagogic-therapeutical role is by Gregory assigned to the words of Church teaching also in another crucial text, where we are told that the divine nature

65 *Eun* III/5 57 (GNO II 180,24–25,11): ἀλλὰ καὶ παντὶ ὀνόματι τῷ περὶ τὴν θείαν λεγομένῳ φύσιν τὸ ἐστὶ πάντως συνυπακούεται [...] εἰ μὴ συνυπακούοιτο τῶν κατελιγμένων ἐκάστῳ τὸ ἐστὶ, ματαία δόξει καὶ ἀνυπόστατος ἡ τῶν προσηγοριῶν ἀπαρίθμησις, πρὸς οὐδὲν ὑποκείμενον ἐρειδομένη. For Gregory the verb assumes here an existential meaning: it draws our mind to the existence of the *hypokeimenon*. Cf. also Aristotle, *De interpr.*, who in the case of the sentences like "a man is just" says that the "is" is predicated additionally as a third component, but it is added to "just" (apud Sorabji, 3, 240).

66 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 332,16–18; tr. Norris 351): Ἀνοίξον λέγει πρὸς τὴν νύμφην ὁ λόγος· δίδωσιν αὐτῇ διὰ τῶν θείων ὀνομάτων τοῦ ἀνοίξαι τὴν δύναμιν (The Word says to the Bride, Open. By according her names of divine import, he gives her the power to open). *Cant* XI (GNO VI 324,15–325,1; tr. Norris 343); cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 87,12–16); *Cant* XI (GNO VI 331,16; 337,1–9).

67 *Cant* XI (GNO VI 326,2–4; tr. Norris 345).

68 *Eun* III/4 32 (GNO II 197,8–10).

are not in reality marked by affections like wrath or piety, but it offers us the teaching in a manner suitable to mankind in order to lead us away from the sin to the live of virtue.⁶⁹

Conclusions

- a) At the level of reasoning about the existence of God and his activities toward us Gregory adopts an epistemological model of reasoning of Stoic-hellenistic origin, and simultaneously he modified it by rejecting its eventual metaphysical connotations.
- b) For Gregory names, and particularly God's names, are not at all bearers of a metaphysical knowledge of the divine nature. The divine names are not also given by God, as clearly maintained Origen who presumably drawing on earlier Platonic sources⁷⁰ made a point of insisting that language does not derive from humans. Nor is names, whatever magnificent and divine they might signify, identical to God, as the Russian worshipers of God's name maintained during the controversies concerning the nature of the divine name of Jesus at the beginning of the 20th century's Russia.⁷¹
- c) On the basis of the precedent analysis I set out the view that the crucial passage from *Cant* III,⁷² I've taken as starting evidence in my communication, should be considered as connected with that one from the 2nd homily, where the Bride is presented to say to the Bridegroom: "*Speak to me, you whom my soul loves*—for so shall I name you, since your name is above every name and cannot be spoken or grasped by any rational nature. Therefore your name, which declares your goodness, is my soul's attitude toward you".⁷³ Moreover, both passages are to be seen and interpreted under the light of that from *Eun*,⁷⁴ where, we are told, that on

69 *Eun* II 419–420 (GNO I 348,22–349,16).

70 Sorabji, *Commentators*, Vol. 3, 220.

71 See L. Sels, "Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium* and Onomatodoxy in Russian Theology", in: Leemans—Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa Contra Eunomium* III, 660–674; C.B. Троицкий, *Учение св. Григория, ер. Нисского, об именах Божиих и "относительное поклонение"*, St. Petersburg 2009.

72 *Cant* III (GNO VI 85,10, 87,1–17).

73 *Cant* II (GNO VI 61,13–17); cf. the footnote of Norris, 69; *Cant* XII (GNO VI 357,8–9); see also *Cant* VI (GNO VI 181,19–21).

74 *Eun* III/6 4–5 (GNO II 187,9–11). I suggest to see this statement in close connection with Gregory's assertion in *Cant* IV (GNO VI 107,1–5; tr. Norris): ἀεὶ τοιοῦτος ὑπάρχων, πάντοτε, ὡν ὅπερ εἶ, οὐτε κατὰ καιρὸν ἀνθρώπων οὐτε ἐπὶ καιροῦ πάλιν ἀποβάλλων τὸ ἄνθος, ἀλλὰ τῇ αἰδιότητι τῆς

account of the Old Testament's theophanies we "might that there is one name indicating the nature of the divinity, the wonder of it wordlessly implanted in our soul". *This means that words, concepts, and statements, in which the Church's teaching has been written down, are designed to be surpassed at the stage of the mystical union with God (deification), the soul's mingling with Christ.* And since the main scope of the *Song*, according to Gregory, consists in initiating "the mind into the innermost divine sanctuary", where the human soul's mingling with the Divine,⁷⁵ I dare to put forward the claim that *the mystical program of the Commentary in Canticum is the surpassing of the multiple names by experiencing the one wordlessly Name of the Bridegroom.*

Bibliography

- Annas, J. *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind*, London 1994.
- Ayres, L. *Nicaea and his Legacy. An Approach to Forth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, Oxford 2006.
- Balás, D.L. *Μετουσία Θεοῦ. Man's Participation in God's perfections According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*, Rome 1966;
- Balás, D.L. "Gregory of Nyssa", in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Berlin-New York 1985, 173–181.
- Barnes, M.R. "Eunomius of Cyzicus and Gregory of Nyssa: Two Traditions of Transcendent Causality", *Vigiliae Christianae* 52 (1998) 59–87.
- Battlo, X. "Une evolution de Gregoire? La distinction *κτιστόν* / *ἄκτιστον* du CE I au CE III", in: J. Leemans—M. Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa Contra Eunomium III. An English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa* (Leuven, 14–17 September 2010), Leiden-Boston 2014, 489–499.
- Bedke, A. *Anthropologie als Mosaik. Die Aufnahme antiker Philosophie durch Gregor von Nyssa in seiner Schrift De hominis opificio*, Münster 2012.
- Brochard, V. *Les Sceptiques grecs* Paris 2002.
- Calabi, F. *God's Acting, Man's Acting. Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria*, Leiden—Boston 2008.

ζωῆς συμπαρατείνων τὴν ὥραν· ᾧ ὄνομα ἢ φιλανθρωπία ἐγένετο ([...] existing forever as such, being at every moment what you are, neither blooming when the appropriate time comes, nor putting off your bloom at the right time, but stretching your springtime splendor out to match the everlastingness of your life—you whose name is love of humankind).

75 *Cant* 1 (GNO VI 22,16–23,16).

- Danielou, J. "La chronologie des œuvres de Grégoire de Nysse", *Studia Patristica* 7 (1966) 159–169.
- Douglass, S. "De Beatitudinibus", in: L.F.M. Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden—Boston 2009, 99–100.
- Friedell, E. *Kulturgeschichte der Neuzeit. Die Krisis der europäischen Seele von der schwarzen Pest bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, Vol. 2, München 2002.
- Hankinson, R.J. "Stoic Epistemology", in: B. Inwood (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, Cambridge 2003, 59–84.
- Kees, R.J. *Die Lehre von der Oikonomia Gottes in der Oratio Catechetica Gregors von Nyssa*, Leiden 1995.
- Laird, M. *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith. Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence* (Oxford Christian Studies), Oxford 2007.
- Lloyd, A.C. *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*, Oxford 1998.
- Long, A.A.—D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 2, Cambridge 1987.
- Louth, A. *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition. From Plato to Denys*, Oxford 1981.
- Mann, F. *Lexikon Gregorianum. Wörterbuch zu den Schriften Gregors von Nyssa*, Bd. VI, Leiden—Boston 2007.
- McGuckin, J.A. "The Strategic Adaptation of Deification in the Cappadocians", in: M.J. Christensen—J.A. Wittung (eds.), *Partakers of Divine Nature. The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, Michigan 2007, 95–114.
- Merki, H. *Ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ. Von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gottähnlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Freiburg in der Schweiz 1952.
- Μουτσούλας, Ἡλ.Δ. *Γρηγόριος Νύσσης. Βίος, συγγράμματα, διδασκαλία*, Ἀθήναι 1997;
- Moutsoulas, E.D. "Le sens de la justice dans la quatrième Homélie sur les Béatitudes de saint Grégoire de Nysse", in: H.R. Drobner—A. Viciano, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes. An English Version with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the Eighth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa* (Paderborn, 14–18 September 1998), Leiden 2000, 389–396.
- Norris, R.A. *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of the Songs* (Writings from the Graeco-Roman World 13), Atlanta (GA) 2012.
- Panagopoulos, G.D. *Η στωική φιλοσοφία στη Θεολογία του Μ. Βασιλείου*, Athens 2009, 262–288;
- Panagopoulos, G.D. "Die stoische Gattung des πρὸς τί πως ἔχον in CE III 1, 131–134 des Gregors von Nyssa", in: J. Leemans—M. Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa Contra Eunomium III. An English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa* (Leuven, 14–17 September 2010), Leiden-Boston 2014, 625–642.
- Peroli, E. *Il Platonismo e l'anthropologia filosofica di Gregorio di Nissa. Con particolare riferimento agli influssi di Platone, Plotino e Porfirio*, Milano 1993,
- Pochoshajew, I. *Die Seele bei Plato, Plotin, Porphyry und Gregor von Nyssa. Erörterung*

- des Verhältnisses von Platonismus und Christentum am Gegenstand der menschlichen Seele bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Patrologia. Beiträge zum Studium der Kirchenväter xii), Frankfurt am Main 2002;
- Pochoshajew, I. *Gregory of Nyssa, De Beatitudinibus iv, Ad Ablabium and Adversus Macedonianos* (Patrologia. Beiträge zum Studium der Kirchenväter xx), Frankfurt am Main 2008.
- Remes, P. *Neoplatonism*, Stocksfield 2008.
- Russell, N. *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford 2009.
- Smith, A. *Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, London-New York 2004.
- Sorabji, R. *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–600 AD*, Vol. 3: *Logic and Metaphysics*, London 2004.
- Torrance, A. "Precedents for Palamas' Essence-Energies Theology in the Cappadocian Fathers", *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009) 47–70.
- Volker, W. *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, Wiesbaden 1955.
- Флоровский, Г. *Восточные Отцы Церкви*, Moscow 2005.

“The Bridegroom Descended to His Garden and the Garden Blossomed Again”: Images of the Incarnation in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs* by Gregory of Nyssa

Helena Panczová

1 Introduction

The majority of ancient Christian authors interpreted love lyricism of the *Song of Songs* as an expression of the relationship between God and his people. The identification of the Bridegroom as Christ was—thanks to frequent use of the wedding imagery in the New Testament¹—unequivocal. The interpretation of the Bride, however, was more varied.²

The Bride represented either an individual soul, or the local Church, or the universal community of the faithful. In Gregory of Nyssa there is yet another interpretation with even wider focus—in the role of the Bride we find also the whole human nature as such. The Song of Song’s erotic relationship is interpreted as the one between God and human *physis*, the relationship that physically culminated in the moment of the Incarnation.³

But the relationship between the Bridegroom and the Bride is not the only one that Gregory uses to explain the mystery of the Incarnation. The main male

1 Christ/the Messiah is the bridegroom in Mk 2.19–20 (Mt 9.15–16, Lk 5.34–35), Mt 25.1–13; Mt 22.2–14; Jn 3.29. Cf. R. Zimmermann, *Geschlechtermetaphorik und Gottesverhältnis*, Tübingen 2001, 258–276. On the New Testament wedding imagery cf. K. Syreeni, “From the Bridegroom’s Time to the Wedding of the Lamb”, in: M. Nissinen—R. Uro (eds.), *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*, Winona Lake (In) 2008, 343–369; J. McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah and the People of God: Marriage in the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge 2006; K. Bjerre-Aspegren, *Bräutigam, Sonne und Mutter: Studien zu einigen Gottesmetaphern bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Lund 1977.

2 Cf. Zimmermann, *Geschlechtermetaphorik und Gottesverhältnis*, 676; L. Welsersheimb, “Das Kirchenbild der griechischen Väterkommentare zum Hohenlied”, *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 70 (1948) 393–449; E. Dassmann, “Ecclesia vel anima. Die Kirche und ihre Glieder in der Hohenliederklärung bei Hippolyt, Origenes und Ambrosius von Mailand”, *Römische Quartalschrift* 61 (1966) 121–144.

3 Gregory’s predecessor in interpreting the *Song of Songs* in terms of the Incarnation was Athanasius of Alexandria. His commentary has been preserved, unfortunately, only in fragments, cf. *Fragmenta in Cantica* (PG 27 1347–1362).

character of the *Song of Songs* is a Shepherd as well and his relationship with his flock is also suitable for Christological interpretation. And an important role in the book is played by its natural setting in a garden or a vineyard. Scenes of nature and its changes offer rich material for reflections on human nature and the Incarnation's influence on it.

Biblical images interpreted in terms of the Incarnation also abound in another of Gregory's works, in the *Life of Moses*. This vast material makes us realize an interesting feature of Gregory's allegorical exegesis—its cognitive power.⁴ He comments on the biblical images in such a way as to highlight some of their archetypal features⁵ that are relevant for the development of his own storyline.⁶ Thanks to this parallelism (or analogy) he is able to give his audience new insights into the matter of the Incarnation.

In the following part I will analyze the images of the *Song of Songs* that Gregory uses for his exposition on the Incarnation: How do they help the audience to better comprehend the mystery of the Incarnation? Then I will briefly have a look at the Incarnation imagery in the *Life of Moses* and compare it with the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*.

4 "Allegory might be positively valued as a kind of artistic form, capable of suggesting and expressing fresh connections of thought". Cf. C.W. Macleod, "Allegory and Mysticism in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa", *Journal of Theological Studies* 22 (1971) 362–379, this on p. 376. It was Aristotle who first pointed out the cognitive power of good metaphors. They depend on an innate ability to see likenesses (Aristotle, *Poetica* 1459a7–8, cf. *Rhetorica* 1405a9–10). The audience perceives a likeness between *a* and *b* which stirs a sudden new understanding (or recognition) of a relationship between the two members. This ability to draw likenesses necessitates an understanding of abstract relationships, a cognitive element. Cf. G.R. Boys-Stones, *Metaphor, Allegory, and the Classical Tradition: Ancient Thought and Modern Revisions*, Oxford 2003, 12–14.

5 The segmentation and classification of images can be found in the works of folklorists: S. Thompson, *Motif-index of folk-literature: a classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, mediaeval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends*, Helsinki 1932–1936, 106–109, 116–117; J. Garry—H. El-Shamy (eds.), *Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature: A Handbook*, Armonk (NY)—London 2005. This material also serves other disciplines: literary criticism, depth psychology, and comparative religions, e.g. N. Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, London 1982; N. Frye, *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of "The Bible and Literature"*, San Diego-New York-London 1992; T. Fabiny, *The Lion and the Lamb: Figuralism and Fulfilment in the Bible, Art and Literature*, London 1992; M. Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination*, London 1965; H. von Beit, *Symbolik des Märchens: Versuch einer Deutung*, Bern 1952; M. Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in religious Symbolism*, Princeton, 1991; J. Chevalier—A. Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, Oxford—Cambridge (Ma) 1994.

6 Cf. C.W. Macleod, "Allegory and Mysticism in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa", *Journal of Theological Studies* 22 (1971) 362–379, this on pp. 371–372.

2 Gregory's Images of the Incarnation in the Homilies on the Song of Songs

Gregory develops his notion of the Incarnation on the basis of three groups of images—pastoral motif, bridegroom/bride and nature. The imagery of each group allows him to focus on a different aspect of the relationship between God and humanity. We find three aspects: the Incarnation is presented (1) as God's descent to humanity, (2) as fusion of divinity and humanity, and (3) God's Incarnation resulting in human blossoming. These three groups cannot be always neatly separated, of course—as it will be seen, the imagery smoothly moves from one to another.

2.1 *Incarnation as God's Descent*

The motif of a hero's descent or *katabasis* (κατάβασις) is a standard part of many traditional narratives on a saviour hero.⁷ In Christian thinking it is specifically connected with the idea of Jesus' redemption of humanity.⁸ In *Homily 10* Gregory explicitly defines:

The descent signifies the work of his (= the Lord's) love towards people (φιλιανθρωπία). For there was no other means to raise us to heights than the Lord's lowering to earth.⁹

The first image in this work (*Homily 2*) that becomes for Gregory the starting point for his exposition on the Incarnation is the image of a shepherd.¹⁰ The Bride addresses her Beloved saying: "Where do you tend your flock?"¹¹ And Gregory follows¹² with an interpretation of the New Testament Parables of the

7 Cf. J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Princeton 1968; Id., *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, New York 1964; Thompson, *Motif-index of folk-literature: a classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, mediaeval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends* (motifs about the hero: A 500–599).

8 Also the descent (κατάβασις) of Moses into Egypt and the liberation of Israel was understood in this way by many Church Fathers. Interestingly enough, in the *Life of Moses* Gregory does not use this traditional interpretation, though he speaks about liberation, too. Cf. H. Panczová, "Oslobodenie Izraela z Egypta: výklad Ex 3–14 v diele Gregora Nysského Život Mojžiša (11, 19–129)", *Studia theologica* 16/2 (2014) 91–102.

9 *Cant* X (GNO VI 304,16–19). Cf. also φιλιανθρωπος οίκονομία in *Cant* XIV (GNO VI 427,13).

10 *Cant* II (GNO VI 61).

11 *Ct* 1.7.

12 In his time, this connection of images had already become part of Christian tradition, cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* III.19.3 (SC 211/2 380), Hilarius, *In Matthaeum* 18.6 (SC 258, 80), Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* 13.31 (PG 33 809C–812A).

Good Shepherd who gives his life for his sheep¹³ and of the Lost Sheep that a caring shepherd went to look for.¹⁴ In Gregory's version the sheep that got lost from the "flock" of spiritual beings is humanity.¹⁵ The Good Shepherd left the ninety-nine angelic powers in heaven and descended to earth. To save the Lost Sheep he took it on his shoulders. And as this Lost Sheep is the whole humanity, Gregory may say about the Good Shepherd that he "took the whole flock on his shoulders".¹⁶

The same idea of God's Incarnation is—according to Gregory—also expressed in the parable of the Good Samaritan¹⁷ which is explained in *Homily 14*. Gregory connects it with the *Song of Songs* on the basis of the expression πλησίον "near", which is found in both of them.¹⁸ In the Bride's speech it is a term of endearment, "beloved", in the parable it signifies "neighbour". The Lord—in the *Song of Songs* presented as the object of the Bride's love—becomes the "neighbour" of human nature just like the Samaritan of the parable. When humanity fell into the hands of bandits, he descended to us, tended our wounds with oil and wine and restored human nature back to health.¹⁹

These are two main images that speak about God's saving *katabasis* to humanity. Marginally or implicitly we find this idea expressed in many other places and contexts.²⁰ We may mention especially the scene of the "cosmic wedding" (*Homily 5*). The Bridegroom descends from heavenly heights, and angelic powers

Accompany the Ruler departing for the earth and introduce the King of glory to the earthly life.²¹

13 Cf. Jn 10.11–16, 26–28.

14 Cf. Mt 18.12–14; Lk 15.3–7.

15 Cf. *Eccl* II 4 (GNO V 304–305; SC 416 164).

16 Cf. *Cant* II (GNO VI 61). In other contexts the sheep represents human nature. Then Gregory says that the Good Shepherd took in him the whole sheep, not just its fleece, as was the opinion of Apollinarius who limited the Incarnation to its physical aspect, cf. *Antirr*h (GNO III/1 151–152). Elsewhere Gregory stresses the statement that the sheep know the voice of their shepherd and they follow him (Jn 10.4). This is because the shepherd is one of them, one of their flock, cf. *Eun* III/2 48–50 (GNO II 68), *Ref Eun* 175 (GNO II 385–386).

17 Cf. Lk 10.30–37.

18 Ct 5.16; Lk 10.29–36.

19 *Cant* XIV (GNO VI 427,2–428,7).

20 Cf. *infra* on "the descent into the garden".

21 Cf. *Cant* V (GNO VI 167).

This vision of a “cosmic wedding” connects us with the next group of images expressing the mystery of the Incarnation, which presents the Incarnation as the most intimate of unions known to humanity.

2.2 *Incarnation as Fusion*

The reason for God’s descent—as we saw in the previous part—was God’s love towards people (φιλανθρωπία). This expression also inspires Gregory’s erotic metaphor of the Incarnation (*Homily 4*).²² The point of departure is the verse

Ἰδοὺ εἶ καλός, ἀδελφιδός μου, καί γε ὡραῖος,
πρὸς κλίνην ἡμῶν σύσκιος

Behold, you are fair, my kinsman, and beautiful,
to our bed, overshadowed.²³

In the biblical text it is not certain what the expression “to our bed” relates to. Gregory understands it as if a verb of motion was implicitly present and the adjective “overshadowed” was predicative. So the verse in his paraphrase says:

ἦλθες [...] σὺ ὁ καλός ἀδελφιδός, ὁ ὡραῖος,
πρὸς τῇ κλίνῃ ἡμῶν σύσκιος γενόμενος

You, the fair kinsman, the beautiful one,
came to our bed *becoming* overshadowed.²⁴

In his exegesis Gregory first explains the paradox that God, “fair and beautiful”, came to us “overshadowed”. According to him this expression means that God is the archetypal Beauty, but as humans cannot see God’s face and stay alive,²⁵

²² This exegesis is introduced by Gregory’s address to Jesus: “Your name is Love-for-humans (φιλανθρωπία)”, cf. *Cant IV* (GNO VI 107,4). The editor Langerbeck expressed his uncertainty about the biblical origin of this quotation (GNO VI 107, nota ad 4). Thanks to the connection of the idea of God’s love and the Incarnation, it might perhaps be understood as a paraphrase of the Johannine expressions “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son [...] that the world might be saved through him” (Jn 3,16–17), or “God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world” (1Jn 4,8–9). Cf. also Tit 3,4–“when the kindness and *love* of God our Saviour *for humanity* (φιλανθρωπία) were revealed”.

²³ Ct 1,6; *Cant IV* (GNO VI 99,6–7). Literal translation of a clumsy original.

²⁴ *Cant IV* (GNO VI 107,11–108,1). My translation.

²⁵ Cf. Ex 33,20.

the Lord veiled the pure light of Godhead with the likeness of a servant²⁶ and in this way he revealed himself to us.²⁷ So it is in fact another form of the theme of descent.

Then Gregory proceeds to the expression “to bed”. God loved human nature (in Greek and many other languages this noun is feminine) so much that he physically united with *her* “in bed”.²⁸ The love that is presented here is not of the compassionate type as in the case with the Good Samaritan. In that case despite the “closeness” (πλησίον) of the persons involved there is still some “distance” between them. Here love means a complete fusion of both participants. In this short passage we find several expressions that leave us in no doubt: ἀνάκρασις “mixing with/together”,²⁹ ἔνωσις “union”, προσκόλλησις “cleaving to”,³⁰ κοινωνία “partnership, intercourse”, συζυγία “coupling, copulation, marriage”.³¹ All these expressions that were used in common speech to express an intimate relationship between man and woman are used by Gregory to hint at the mystery of the intimate union of God and humanity in the Incarnation.³²

The union of God and humanity has some consequences, of course. To express these, Gregory employs images of nature—a garden or a vineyard in blossom.

2.3 *Incarnation as Human Blossoming*

The images of a garden, a vineyard or a field have an erotic potential, too, as they may symbolize the female body. It is a remnant of the archaic perception of earth as “feminine” and agricultural activity as “masculine”. A parallel image presents woman as fruit tree (a vine, a date palm, a pomegranate tree). This imagery is quite obvious in several places in the *Song of Songs*.³³

26 Cf. Phil 2.7.

27 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 108).

28 Ct 1.16b. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 108–109).

29 Cf. συνανάκρασις in *Cant* V (GNO VI 145).

30 Cf. Mt 19.5.

31 Cf. also *Cant* XV (GNO VI 436,10).

32 This erotic image of the Incarnation is—to the best of my knowledge—Gregory’s original development of the biblical imagery. He builds on Pauline expressions where the Apostle applies marital metaphors on the relationship of Christ and the Church (2 Cor 11.2; Eph 5.31–32). For Gregory, however, the concept of “Church” is very wide—it includes not only the Christian community, but also the Jewish people and pagan nations (cf. *Cant* V, GNO VI 140–146). And if we do not forget Gregory’s belief in universal salvation, the concept of “Church” will include really the whole of humanity.

33 Cf. Ct 1.6 (vineyard), 2.15 (vineyard, vine), 4.12 (garden), 4.13 (pomegranate), 6.11 (garden), 7.9 (date palm, vine), 8.11–12 (vineyard) etc.

In some other places in the Bible this implicitly erotic relationship between a farmer and his farmland/plants was reworked to describe God and his loving care for Israel.³⁴ Gregory follows the latter line and connects it with some other biblical agricultural images. In this way he can focus on another aspect of the relationship between God and humanity, which could not be expressed with the metaphors used previously—what happens to human nature when it is with (or without) God.

The powerful bond between nature and humanity (which is not only the bond of analogy, but also a very existential one in agricultural societies) gives Gregory material to retell the great Christian epic of humanity—the story of the creation of humans in the image of God, the Fall and the Incarnation which brings about the renewal of the image of God in humans.³⁵

2.3.1 Garden/Vineyard—Human Nature in the Image of God

In this stream of imagery the images of cultivated nature—a garden or a vineyard—represent the human nature created in the image of God. The interpretation of a garden as human nature (*Homily 15*) is built on the first chapters of the *Book of Genesis* where it speaks of the Garden of Eden planted by God.³⁶ Gregory explains:

The true farmer planted trees into his soil, i.e. into us people. Because we are his farmland, as Paul says.³⁷ And he [Logos] is the one who, in the beginning, in paradise, tended the human plant, planted by the heavenly Father.³⁸

An image parallel with the Garden of Eden is a vineyard³⁹ that appears in one of the introductory verses of the *Song of Songs* (*Homily 2*). The Bride sadly cries: “I have not kept my vineyard”.⁴⁰ And Gregory explains:

34 In *Isaiah* God is depicted as the planter of a vineyard that is Israel (Is 5.1–7, 27.3). This image is developed in the New Testament in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mt 21.33–44, Mk 12.1–12, Lk 20.9–18, Jn 15.1–8). We may also mention the Parable of the Sower who sows the Word of God into human souls (Mt 13.1–9; 18–23, Mk 4.1–9; 13–20, Lk 8.4–8; 11–15).

35 Cf. R. Leys, *L'image de Dieu chez Saint Grégoire de Nyse: Esquisse d'une doctrine*, Paris 1951; N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, Oxford 2004; M.J. Christensen—J.A. Wittung (eds.), *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Tradition*, Grand Rapids (Mi) 2007.

36 Cf. Gn 2.8–9.

37 1Cor 3.9.

38 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 436,17–437,2).

39 *Cant II* (GNO VI 57–60).

40 Ct 1.6e.

Vineyard means the same as *paradise*—in that case, too, it was man's duty to guard it. Negligence in guarding causes man's expulsion from paradise.⁴¹

2.3.2 Waste Land after the Fall

The First Fall when God's image in humans was damaged⁴² led to the "expulsion from paradise" according to the Bible.⁴³ Side by side with this Gregory also uses another idea: the dwelling place of humanity remains the same, but its quality was down-graded. The beautiful garden/vineyard was destroyed and turned into wilderness.

This breach of cultivation was caused by an incursion of wild beasts.⁴⁴ Untamed animals that are out of human control represent passions⁴⁵ gnawing at the image of God in humans. Wild wood, natural habitat of the beasts, represents human nature after the Fall,⁴⁶ which is like a desolate garden or a vineyard run wild.

2.3.3 Renewal of Cultivation—Incarnation

Gregory presents the Incarnation as the return to the original cultivation. To express this idea he uses several beautiful images.

The most explicit one is presented in the discussion of the verse "My kinsman went down to his garden"⁴⁷ (*Homily 15*). Our "kinsman", the one who is close to us and cares about us like the Good Samaritan, "went down" to human

⁴¹ *Cant* II (GNO VI 57,9–12).

⁴² *Cant* II (GNO VI 60).

⁴³ Cf. Gn 3,23.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Cant* IV (GNO VI 116), XV (GNO VI 437,3–4), a wild boar *Cant* XV (GNO VI 437,3–5). Foxes in *Cant* V (GNO VI 164–168) also belong into this stream of imagination, as they represent the influence of demons in a human soul.

⁴⁵ Cf. frogs during the plagues in Egypt, *Vit Moys* II, 68–69 (GNO VII/1 52–53; SC 1 bis, 144–146), or snakes in the desert, *Vit Moys* II, 272–276 (GNO VII/1 126–128; SC 1 bis, 290–292), *Or dom* IV (GNO VII/2 53). It is their irrational destructivity that makes them a suitable image for the deepest levels of the human unconscious. Cf. Chevalier—Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 24.

⁴⁶ *Cant* IV (GNO VI 125). Wild wood (ὕλη), due to the semantics of the Greek word, also represented "matter" in the Neoplatonist allegorical interpretation of Homer (Ulysses in captivity on Calypso's woody island, Homer, *Odyssey*, 1.48–87). Cf. F. Buffière, *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque*, Paris 1956, 461–464. Cf. also R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1986; M. Niehoff (ed.), *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters*. Leiden-Boston 2012.

⁴⁷ Ct 6,2, *Cant* XV (GNO VI 436,3–437,8).

nature, to the garden laid waste. He took it for his own and made it beautiful and blossoming again.⁴⁸

Another image that Gregory uses in this context is an apple-tree in wild wood (*Homily 4*).⁴⁹ The Garden of Eden, i.e. human nature in the image of God, turned into wilderness after the Fall. Into this environment an apple-tree, Jesus, was planted.⁵⁰ This implantation of divinity gives human nature a great boost. This apple-tree amid wilderness becomes a new Tree of Life⁵¹ that allows the change of nature run wild into the Garden of Eden again.⁵²

The consequence of the Incarnation is the restoration of human nature as such—the garden/vineyard is brought to bloom again. Within this general frame a single human soul, represented as a single vine plant, may flourish, too.⁵³ What does it mean? Gregory sees the answer in the verse where the Bride says: “My kinsman is my vine flower”.⁵⁴ If ripe grapes represent Christ crucified,⁵⁵ then the vine flower is the child Jesus. The Bride is said to be his mother⁵⁶—though not in the usual way. The child is born *in* her, it grows up *in* her.⁵⁷

48 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 437,3–8).

49 Ct 2.3a–b; *Cant IV* (GNO VI 116–125).

50 The contrast between wild trees and a cultivated apple-tree hints at the similarity and dissimilarity between humans and Jesus. He had human nature, he passed through human temptations, but he was without sin. *Cant IV* (GNO VI 116–117). Cf. Heb 4.15.

51 Cf. Gn 2.8–9.

52 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 119); *XV* (GNO VI 437,3–5).

53 Ct 2.15 αἱ ἄμπελοι ἡμῶν κυπρίζουσιν. *Cant V* (GNO VI 164–168). The Bride is ἡ ἄμπελος ἡ εὐθη-νοῦσα, *Cant III* (GNO VI 95,5).

54 Ct 1.14 βότρυς τῆς κύπρου ἀδελφιδός μου ἐμοί. The expression βότρυς τῆς κύπρου literally means “a cluster of henna blossoms”, which is the meaning of the Septuagint. Gregory, however, uses the word βότρυς exclusively in the context of vine, either as a cluster of vine blossoms or a bunch of grapes. Similarly, the rare word κύπρος probably means just “a flower” for him, not specifically “a henna flower”. Gregory may have derived it from the related verb κυπρίζω “to blossom (like henna)” (Ct 2.13,15), where the idea of “henna” disappears. So for Gregory the expression βότρυς τῆς κύπρου means “a cluster of flowers of a vine plant”, or simply “a vine flower”. The dative ἐμοί may be interpreted in several ways. In the Gregorian context I think the dative of possession is the most probable: the relationship is paraphrased as “one’s own (ἴδιον) fruit” and “the bunch of grapes of one’s own (ἐαυτοῦ) soul”, *Cant III* (GNO VI 95,11–12).

55 Cf. Hippolyt of Rome, *Benedictiones Isaac et Iacob* (PO 27.82), Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* II.2.19.3 (SC 108, 46–48), *Vit Moys* II, 268 (GNO VII/1 126; SC 1 bis, 288).

56 Cf. *Cant III* (GNO VI 95–99).

57 This idea is parallel with the image of the baby Moses in *Vit Moys* II, 1–5 (GNO VII/1 33–35; SC 1 bis, 106–108). That baby, too, is born in us: it represents rationality, one of the immanent characteristics of the image of God in humans. Cf. H. Panczová, “Racionalita ako základ duchovného rozvoja: Analýza alegorickej exegézy v *Živote Mojžiša* II,1–18 od Gregora z Nyssy”, *Studia theologica* 18/1 (2016) 21–32.

This miniature picture is a reflexion⁵⁸ (literally) of the great story of the Incarnation.⁵⁹

3 Images of the Incarnation in Gregory's Other Works

Now let us have a look at Gregory's images of the Incarnation in general, in his other works. Gregory found material for this kind of interpretation in other biblical books, too, especially in the *Exodus* cycle. The dominant source is the *Life of Moses*, but the *Exodus* theme marginally appears also in some other places.

In the *Exodus* episodes Gregory saw the Incarnation foreshadowed, (1) firstly, in the images expressing some miraculous change—when Moses' rod turned into a snake,⁶⁰ Moses' right hand changed its colour.⁶¹ (2) Another sort of images were the ones expressing a paradoxical union of something heavenly and something earthly, as was the combination of heavenly fire and earthly bush in the theophany in the burning bush,⁶² manna, the heavenly bread descended on the earth,⁶³ the Tables of the Law, made of earthly material and inscribed on with the finger of God,⁶⁴ and the Tabernacle, the earthly version of the heavenly archetype.⁶⁵ (3) The third group are the images expressing God's presence amid his people—in the form of the pillar of light⁶⁶ and the Taberna-

⁵⁸ Cf. *Cant* III (GNO VI 98).

⁵⁹ As regards the identity of the Bride, Gregory's focus smoothly shifts between human nature in general and an individual human soul (rarely also the humanity as a whole). This may seem like an exegetical inconsistency. However, if it is seen from the point of view of his exposition on the Incarnation, the seeming inconsistency disappears: the focus is still on the Incarnation—the author just speaks about its various aspects. In analyzing Gregory's exegetical works, which also have high literary qualities, I think it very useful to bear in mind the idea of the "mobile focus" of Greek poetics. Greek tragedies may seem inconsistent, too, if we focus on a pre-defined "main character". But the ancient audience was trained to concentrate *sympathetically* and the focus of their sympathetic attention may have changed from one scene to another. There may be several focal characters without any damage to the poetic unity of the drama. Cf. M. Heath, *The Poetics of Greek Tragedy*, Stanford (California) 1987, 90–123 (Cf. also his *Unity in Greek Poetics*, Oxford 1989).

⁶⁰ Ex 4.1–5, 7.8–12, *Vit Moys* II, 31–34 (GNO VII/1 42–43; SC 1 bis, 124–126).

⁶¹ Ex 4.6–7, *Vit Moys* II, 27–30 (GNO VII/1 41–42; SC 1 bis, 122–124).

⁶² Ex 3–4.17; *Vit Moys* II, 20 (GNO VII/1 39; SC 1 bis, 116–118).

⁶³ Ex 16; *Vit Moys* II, 139–140 (GNO VII/1 77–78; SC 1 bis, 192–194).

⁶⁴ Ex 34; *Vit Moys* II, 214–215 (GNO VII/1 107–108; SC 1 bis, 252–254).

⁶⁵ *Vit Moys* II, 174–175 (GNO VII/1 91–92; SC 1 bis, 220).

⁶⁶ Ex 13.21, Ps 99(98).7, *Inscr* II 9 (GNO V 106; SC 466 352).

cle or later the Temple⁶⁷ (This might be considered a subdivision of the group 2—this presence is also a paradox of the union of heaven and earth).⁶⁸

If we compare the images of the Incarnation based on Exodus with the ones found in the *Song of Songs*, a substantial difference between them becomes obvious. In the Exodus images the Incarnation is presented as something hardly comprehensible, a miracle, a paradox. On the other hand, in the images of the *Song of Songs* the Incarnation (though still a mystery, of course) is presented to us in terms we can easily understand—in earthly terms of (1) compassion, (2) passionate love, and (3) the joy of nature in blossom. In the *Song of Songs* God really descends to earth and becomes human.

4 Conclusion

It may be summed up that the Incarnation in the Commentary on the *Song of Songs* is presented on the basis of relationships. This allows the author to turn his focus also to the human “participant” of the Incarnation—what happens with human nature in a relationship with God.

- (1) The first group of images represent Incarnation as God’s descent—the shepherd who came to look for the lost sheep, the Good Samaritan who descended to the injured man. God feels compassion towards fallen humanity and helps it rise again: God’s descent results in human ascent. Compassion bridges the inequality between the two participants, but the gap between them is still obvious.
- (2) The second image, God’s passionate desire for physical union with humanity, differs exactly in this respect. The Incarnation is presented as an irrevocable fusion of the two participants. It means that with the Incarnation not only did God become human, but also humanity acquired an access to divine qualities.
- (3) In the natural imagery the focus is on humanity. God’s garden and vineyard represent human nature created in the image of God. The damage caused by the First Fall is depicted as an incursion of wild beasts into cultivated land and its subsequent devastation. The Incarnation is the return to the original cultivation. It is expressed as the Bridegroom’s coming to his garden and as implantation of an apple-tree (= Jesus) to the wild wood.

67 *Diem nat* (GNO X/2 236), *Epist* III 19–20 (GNO VIII/2 25; SC 363, 138), *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 381).

68 Gregory’s images of the Incarnation in the *Life of Moses* are discussed in detail in H. Panczová, “Božie Vtelenie a obnovenie Božieho obrazu v človeku (Gregor z Nyssy: Život Mojžiša)”, *Studia theologica* 18/3 (2016) 23–35.

These steps result in full flourish of the garden or vineyard, i.e. human nature. This last group of images gives us an idea of what humanity participating in God's qualities may look like.

Bibliography

- von Beit, H. *Symbolik des Märchens: Versuch einer Deutung*, Bern 1952.
- Bjerre-Aspegren, K. *Bräutigam, Sonne und Mutter: Studien zu einigen Gottesmetaphern bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Lund 1977.
- Bodkin, M. *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination*, London 1965.
- Boys-Stones, G.R. *Metaphor, Allegory, and the Classical Tradition: Ancient Thought and Modern Revisions*, Oxford 2003.
- Buffière, F. *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque*, Paris 1956.
- Campbell, J. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Princeton 1968.
- Campbell, J. *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, New York 1964.
- Chevalier, J.—A. Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, Oxford-Cambridge (MS) 1994.
- Christensen, M.J.—J.A. Wittung (eds.). *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Tradition*, Grand Rapids (Mi) 2007.
- Dassmann, E. "Ecclesia vel anima. Die Kirche und ihre Glieder in der Hohenliedekklärung bei Hippolyt, Origenes und Ambrosius von Mailand", *Römische Quartalschrift* 61 (1966) 121–144.
- Eliade, M. *Images and Symbols: Studies in religious Symbolism*, Princeton, 1991.
- Fabiny, T. *The Lion and the Lamb. Figuralism and Fulfilment in the Bible, Art and Literature*, London 1992.
- Frye, N. *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, London 1982.
- Frye, N. *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of "The Bible and Literature"*, San Diego—New York—London 1992.
- Garry, J.—H. El-Shamy (eds.). *Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature: A Handbook*, Armonk (NY)—London 2005.
- Heath, M. *The Poetics of Greek Tragedy*, Stanford (California) 1987, 90–123.
- Heath, M. *Unity in Greek Poetics*, Oxford 1989.
- Lamberton, R. *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*, Berkeley—Los Angeles—London 1986.
- Leys, R. *L'image de Dieu chez Saint Grégoire de Nysse: Esquisse d'une doctrine*, Paris 1951.
- Macleod, C.W. "Allegory and Mysticism in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa", *Journal of Theological Studies* 22 (1971) 362–379.
- McWhirter, J. *The Bridegroom Messiah and the People of God: Marriage in the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge 2006.

- Niehoff, M. (ed.). *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters*. Leiden-Boston 2012.
- Panczová, H. "Oslobodenie Izraela z Egypta: výklad Ex 3–14 v diele Gregora Nysského Život Mojžiša (11, 19–129)", *Studia theologica* 16/2 (2014) 91–102.
- Panczová, H. "Racionalita ako základ duchovného rozvoja: Analýza alegorickej exegézy v Živote Mojžiša 11,1–18 od Gregora z Nyssy", *Studia theologica* 18/1 (2016) 21–32.
- Panczová, H. "Božie Vtelenie a obnovenie Božieho obrazu v človeku (Gregor z Nyssy: Život Mojžiša)", *Studia theologica* 18/3 (2016) 23–35.
- Russell, N. *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, Oxford 2004.
- Syreeni, K. "From the Bridegroom's Time to the Wedding of the Lamb", in: M. Nissinen—R. Uro (eds.), *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*, Winona Lake (In) 2008, 343–369.
- Thompson, S. *Motif-index of folk-literature: a classification of narrative elements in folk-tales, ballads, myths, fables, mediaeval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends*, Helsinki 1932–1936.
- Welsersheimb, L. "Das Kirchenbild der griechischen Väterkommentare zum Hohenlied", *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 70 (1948) 393–449.
- Zimmermann, R. *Geschlechtermetaphorik und Gottesverhältnis*, Tübingen 2001.

The Multiform Wisdom of God, Apophasis and the Church in Gregory of Nyssa's Reading of *Rom* 1.20 in *Cant* XIII¹

Johannes Aakjær Steenbuch

1 Introduction

A typical English translation of Paul's Epistle to the *Rm* 1.20 reads: "For since the creation of the world (ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου) His invisible attributes [or things] (τὰ [...] ἀόρατα) are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made (τοῖς ποιήμασιν) [...]" (NKJV). This claim is often taken to support so-called natural theology or the idea of a general revelation, directly accessible to all, as opposed to a particular revelation, accessible only to some, or only indirectly to all (e.g., through Scripture).²

There are, however, other options for translating *Rm* 1.20, which make it less obviously compatible with an idea of natural theology or general revelation.³ While some Bible translations by "τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ" understand a reference to God's "invisible essence",⁴ there are good examples of alternative readings in Patristic as well as contemporary contexts. Athanasius, for example, presented a more Christocentric reading of *Rm* 1.20.⁵ Origen argued that *Rm* 1.20 "pertain to all men in whom natural reason exists", but he added that "the invisible things" (τὰ [...] ἀόρατα), named by Paul, "refer to created beings", rather than God himself.⁶

1 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 384–385).

2 E.g., J.D.G. Dunn, *Rm* 1–8. *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 38a, Dallas 1988, 56. For example, Tatian noticed that God's "invisible attributes are visible to the mind's eye through his works since the creation of the world", by which he understood the creation of the universe. Tatian, like Clement of Alexandria, affirms this for polemical purposes, as both criticize the Greeks in particular for not honoring God as God. See Tatian, *Oratio ad Gracos*, Migne 13,2; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticos* 81,2. See also Kathy L. Gaca—L.L. Welborn (eds.), *Early Patristic Readings of Romans*, New York 2006, 12 f.

3 See R.A. Young, "The Knowledge of God in *Romans* 1:18–23: Exegetical and Theological reflections", *JETS* 43/4 (2000) 695–707.

4 E.g. the Danish Authorized version from 1992.

5 Athanasius, against the Arians, noticed that when the "everlasting power" of God according to *Rm* 1.20 (ἡ τε αἰδὶς αὐτοῦ δύναμις) can be seen by "the things that are made", this refers to Christ: "[...] and what the power of God is, he teaches us elsewhere himself, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God". See Athanasius, *Apologia Contra Arianos* IV, 11.

6 Origen, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Romanos* I 17,2.

In modern theology it has been argued that it is only the invisibility of God's things that can be known through creation, but that God himself is unknowable (it is, in other words, the need for particular revelation, which can be known generally), which would make Paul's claims more in line with, for example, the claims about the "unknown God" in Acts 17.⁷

It has also been argued that "the things that are made" (τοῖς ποιήμασιν) does not refer to creation as such, but to God's deeds of redemption throughout history, or more specifically the church as God's "workmanship" (ποίημα), as in Eph 2.10. If so, the church is the workmanship of God through which particular revelation takes place—a particular revelation, however, which is indirectly available outside the church, as God's divinity can be discerned through the church.

In his thirteenth sermon on the *Song of Songs*, Gregory of Nyssa presents an interpretation, which resembles this alternative. Gregory explains that the bride's description of the bridegroom (the virgin soul's description of Christ) in the Ct 5.8–12 does not refer to God's "invisible and incomprehensible realities", but to the things revealed in the economy of salvation:

Now all these statements, with their description of the Bridegroom's beauty, point not to the invisible and incomprehensible realities of the Godhead (τῶν ἀοράτων τε καὶ ἀκαταλήπτων τῆς θεότητός) but to the things that were revealed in the economy (τῶν κατ' οἰκονομίαν φανερωθέντων), when Deity, having put on human nature, was revealed on the earth and held converse with human beings. By their means, as the apostle says, "the invisible things of him [...] have been clearly apprehended in his works" (Rm 1.20) as revealed through the foundation of the cosmos that is the church (διὰ τῆς τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ κόσμου κατασκευῆς φανερούμενα). For the creation of the cosmos signifies the foundation of the church (κόσμου γὰρ κτίσις ἐστὶν ἢ τῆς ἐκκλησίας κατασκευῆς) [...].⁸

7 K. Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed., Oxford 1933, 422; E.F. Rogers: *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God*, Notre Dame 1995, 128–129. Such claims also seem to be more compatible with the often made distinction between knowing the existence of God and knowing something about God's essence or attributes: "Do not take our frankness as ground for atheistic caviling and exalt yourselves over against us for acknowledging our ignorance. Conviction, you see, of a thing's existence is quite different from knowledge of what it is" Gregory of Nazianzen, *De Theologia* 28.5.

8 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 384–385; tr. Norris 404,21–27). All references to Gregory's homilies on the *Song of Songs* are to the GNO VI. The translation used is A. Richard—Jr. Norris (eds.), *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012.

The church is the body of the bridegroom (Christ), who is made known as the virgin soul describes the marks of the bridegroom by appealing to “the things that have been revealed to us for the sake of our salvation”, says Gregory.⁹ These are the “invisible things of God”, which are made known through the foundation of the church, as “the world” signifies “the church” (κόσμου γὰρ κτίσις ἐστίν).¹⁰

Gregory’s reading of Rm 1.20 does not result from a denial of natural theology altogether (examples of natural theology are numerous in Gregory). Though God’s transcendent nature cannot be known in a positive sense, according to Gregory, his immanent (προχείρου) activities (ἐνέργεια) can be known positively “from what are believed to be His operations in regard to our life”.¹¹ In this way, God’s “invisible beauty” can be known by contemplating the beauty and goodness of created nature, while God’s wisdom and power to create by mere will can be conceived in the “entire created order” (i.e., by what can be called general revelation).¹² This wisdom is, however, only “simple and uniform” (ἀπλὴν τε καὶ μονοειδῆ), and not the wisdom which Gregory identifies with the invisible things of God in Rm 1.20. Rather than being God’s incomprehensible nature, the invisible things of God are the economy of salvation, in which can be discerned what Gregory calls the “multiform” (ποικίλη) wisdom of God.

In the following it will be discussed in what this multiform wisdom consists. It will then be discussed how the multiform wisdom of God can be analogized to Gregory’s apophaticism, and how these two things come together in practice. Finally it will be discussed how this affects the role of the church, through which the multiform wisdom of God is revealed, according to Gregory.

2 The Multiform Wisdom of God

God’s wisdom can, says Gregory, be seen in “the entire created order” (i.e., through what is often called general revelation). This wisdom is, however, only what Gregory calls the “simple and uniform wisdom of God” (τὴν ἀπλὴν τε καὶ μονοειδῆ τοῦ θεοῦ σοφίαν).¹³ Gregory distinguishes this wisdom from the “multi-

9 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 386; tr. Norris 406,23–24).

10 That “world” (κόσμος) in the New Testament does not always refer to creation as such but more particularly to the church is an idea that can also be found in Origen. See Origen, *In Jn* 1.4. See also M.W. Elliot, *The Song of Songs and Christology in the Early Church*, 381–451, Tübingen 2000, 97.

11 *Eun I* 420 (GNO I 149,5).

12 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 386; tr. Norris 406,16); *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 254,10).

13 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 255; tr. Norris 268,7).

form wisdom of God" (ἡ ποικίλη τοῦ θεοῦ σοφία).¹⁴ It is this multiform wisdom of God which Gregory identifies with the invisible things of God, the economy of salvation, revealed through the foundation of the church (cf. Eph. 3.10).

The multiform wisdom of God can be known only by what is often called particular revelation. This has to do with how God's wisdom is realized historically. Echoing Paul in Rm 13.32 (where God's mercy depends on the historical fact that all has been shut up unto disobedience), Gregory explains that as pertaining to God, concepts such as "mercy" and "pity" do not refer to abstract properties of the divine essence, which cannot be known, but to God's historical work in the world in relation to human beings.¹⁵ Gregory develops this argument in his polemicism against Neo-Arianism in the form of Eunomius of Cyzicus (d.C. 393), who claimed that our concepts of God must reflect positive definitions of God's nature.¹⁶ Against this Gregory argued that our concepts for God's nature refer to negative definitions, made up by denying that which is not God. Positive concepts about God cannot refer to God's nature or essence.

Every discovery is made through conception (ἐπίνοια), but in any object that is known through conception we also comprehend the limits of creation, says Gregory.¹⁷ Concepts such as "mercy" do not reveal anything positive about God's nature, but can positively only be understood as referring to something in a concrete (and thus particular) historical setting. God's mercy is an immanent (πρόχειρος) thing, not an abstract property of the divine nature, says Gregory.¹⁸ There can, in other words, be no positive abstract or general knowledge of God's mercy and pity. Positive divine properties express God's wisdom,¹⁹ but since they are realized in particular historical contexts, they cannot be known generally (if by this we mean independently of particular historical contexts).

14 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 255; tr. Norris 268,4).

15 "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, long-suffering, and of great goodness. Now what do these words tell us? Do they indicate His operations, or His nature? No one will say that they indicate aught but His operations. At what time, then, after showing mercy (οἰκτιρμοῦς) and pity (ἐλέου), did God acquire His name from their display? Was it before man's life began? But who was there to be the object of pity? Was it, then, after sin entered into the world? But sin entered after man. The exercise, therefore, of pity, and the name itself, came after man". *Eun I* 426–434 (GNO I 151–152). See J. Steenbuch, *Doing the Unthinkable* (unpublished PhD-dissertation), Copenhagen 2014, 209 ff.

16 See R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence II—The way of negation, Christian and Greek*, Bonn 1986; L. Karfiková—S. Douglass—J. Zachhuber (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II* (Olomouc, September 15–18, 2004), Leiden 2007.

17 *Eccl VII* (GNO V 412,6–14).

18 *Eun II* (GNO I 149).

19 *Or cat* (GNO III/4 20,1–3).

The historical work of God is what Gregory refers to as the economy (οἰκονομία). It is in the economy that the multiform wisdom of God is made known,²⁰ as it results in the foundation of the Church, through which it can be seen how God's multiform wisdom works by "knitting together contraries".²¹ The manifoldness of this wisdom is revealed in how "life is mingled with death", and how "the Word became flesh" as Christ became a "slave while remaining king", and how "the power of the adversary was overthrown" by "the weakness of the cross", and similar things referring to the history of salvation. It is through these things that Christ is made the head of the church, and thus what should be understood by the "foundation of the cosmos that is the church". All of these things pertaining to the history of salvation are multiform, not simple, says Gregory.²²

As Gregory explains that the multiform wisdom of God is seen in how he "[...] gave himself as a ransom to death on our account [...]",²³ he is expressing what has been called the ransom theory of the atonement, as Christ is considered to be a ransom paid to death.²⁴ The "wisdom and skill of the divine economy" was seen in how he executed this plan in "orderly series and sequence", says Gregory in his *Catechetical Oration*.²⁵ This wisdom is what Gregory calls the multiform wisdom of God in his sermons on the *Song of Songs*. In distinction from the "simple and uniform wisdom of God", which can be seen in God's act of creation, and which works wonders "in agreement with the nature" of things, this wisdom works wonders which exceeds the laws of nature, which is exactly what makes it marvelous.²⁶

The multiform wisdom of God consists in the knitting together of contraries, such as life and death. Where death by nature is contrary to life, by the works of Christ it has become the way to life. As such, the ransom theory of the atonement is only a metaphor for what is really the case, it seems. The mystery of God's plan, Gregory explains in the *Catechetical Oration*, consists in how Christ by his incarnation, death and resurrection himself has become the meeting-

20 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 384; tr. Norris 404,23).

21 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 255; tr. Norris 268,13).

22 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 256; tr. Norris 268,20–21).

23 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 256; tr. Norris 268,18–19).

24 R. Collins, *Understanding Atonement: A New and Orthodox Theory*, Grantham 1995. Gregory develops this idea in parallel with the notion that Christ in some way cheated the devil by assuming human flesh, as bait is put on a fishhook etc. See *Or cat* (GNO III/4 21). For our present purpose what is important is the fact that God's wisdom for Gregory works through opposites.

25 *Or cat* (GNO III/4 20).

26 *Cant VIII* (GNO VI 255; tr. Norris 268,7–9); *Or cat* (GNO III/4 13,10–14).

point or boundary (μεθόριον) between life and death, and thereby the originating principle (γενόμενος ἀρχή) in the reunification of the human body and soul, separated in death.²⁷

In the twelfth sermon on the *Song of Songs*, Gregory repeats this theme as he says that “[...] it is through death that the soul is raised up (for if it does not die, it remains for all time dead and incapable of life, but by dying it emerges into life once it has put off all its deadness) [...]”,²⁸ so that “death raises us up from death”,²⁹ and that “[...] it is a fine thing to be struck, precisely because it is truly a fine thing for the soul to be freed from death. The prophet says that God too acts in this way: by killing he gives life, and by striking, heals”.³⁰

Whether or not the soul actually dies in an ontological sense, or if it only experiences death in this process, is secondary. What is important for Gregory is that there is no direct way to life, but that God’s multiform wisdom has construed salvation by knitting together contraries, in such a way that true life presupposes death. This is why the wisdom of God revealed through the foundation of the church is multiform, not simple.

3 Apophasis as Analogy to the “Multiform Wisdom of God”?

In his discussion of Gn 2.9 in the twelfth sermon on the *Song of Songs*, Gregory explains how the two trees can both be at the center of paradise: “[...] each of the two trees is located in the same place at the midpoint: one of them is there because of what it is by nature, while the other, coming along secondarily, is there by privation (διὰ στερήσεως)”.³¹ The tree of life is there by nature, while the tree with knowledge of good and evil is negatively dependent (as privation) on the tree of life. The knowledge (of good and of evil) must be negated for life to be attained. Humanity must die to the “dead and animal life” (what Gregory at other points refers to as the tunics of skin in Gn 3.21) in order to reach eternal life (ἀει ζωή). Hence, for Gregory there is an obvious epistemological aspect to the process of salvation: A certain kind of knowledge must be negated if life is

27 *Or cat* (GNO III/4 16,79–86).

28 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 347; tr. Norris 366,13–14).

29 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 347; tr. Norris 366,20).

30 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 362; tr. Norris 382,2–4). A similar notion can be found in Origen, *Hom. in Ier.* 1,15–16, though the idea here is that it is the sinner as sinner that is killed as the person is made new. The idea that God makes life through death became an integral part of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*. See I. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, Leiden 2013, 189; 270; 509.

31 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 351; tr. Norris 370,19–20).

to be attained. It is not only the body that must die in order that the soul can be purged of its vices,³² but the knowledge of good and evil must be negated as well.³³

It is tempting to see in this a parallel to Gregory's apophatic dialectics developed in his negative theology. According to Gregory, God's infinity means that we can only talk of God's nature through negative definitions. For example, seemingly positive names like "immortal", "indissoluble" or "just" can, as pertaining to God's nature, be defined only as negations or the *apophasis* of the privation of good: Death, corruption, evil, injustice and the like.³⁴ Similarly, in the thirteenth homily on the *Song of Songs* (previous to his reading of Rm 1.20), Gregory argues that the negation of sin is necessarily implied in the knowledge of God, and that the 'yes' and the 'no' in Mt 5.37 are inseparable: "[...] the truth in the 'yes' is equally discerned through both".³⁵ As Norris says, the "no" is a negative action that supports the affirmation of truth by banishing the passions from the soul.³⁶

We see in this, and in Gregory's claims about the interdependence of the two trees in paradise, a parallel to how death, by negating or destroying sin, has been made the way to life by the multiform wisdom of God. Negative theology and the multiform wisdom of God both approach the good by negating sin, the privation of good. Both work, in a sense, by knitting together contraries or opposites, through negation. But there is a difference: Negation or unsaying (*apophasis*) is the epistemological act of human beings, but when Gregory talks of the knitting together of contraries by the multiform wisdom of God, he is talking about God's act towards human beings. The *apophasis* of negative theology is initiated by human beings and never leads to any final, positive knowledge of God or eternal life—only the knitting together of contraries by God's multiform wisdom does that. As is clear from Gregory's reading of Dt 32.39, it is

32 *Or cat* (GNO III/4 8).

33 Origen, in his apology against Celsus, argued that "death ceases in the world when the sin of the world dies (τοῦ κόσμου ἁμαρτία)". Adam and Christ are the two trees that bring death and life respectively. See Origen, *Contra Celsum* VI, 36.

34 *Eun* I 355–357 (GNO I 132); *Eun* II 477 (GNO I 365,15–22).

35 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 374; tr. Norris 394,6–7).

36 R.A. Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa, Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012, 397. Compare also to Origen's claim, that if we want to know what righteousness is, we need to know first what unrighteousness is. By knowing what is unjust we will also realize what is just. The nature and righteousness of God is incomprehensible to human perception, but by negating the unrighteousness which dwells in all rational creatures, the righteousness of God is confirmed "as if from the opposition of opposites". See Origen, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Romanos* 3.1.7.

God himself who kills in order to give life, and strikes in order to heal, and it is as the Word draws the soul to himself by his commandment, that the soul is made to follow the Word—none of this is the achievement of negative theology.³⁷

The practice of *apophasis* can, however, be understood as a human parable or analogy to God's multiform wisdom. Apophasis is in this sense conversion, the human response to God's works.³⁸ This conversion is continuous as the incomprehensibility of the good means that spiritual progress requires an ongoing negation of the soul's conceptions of God at the present stage in order for the next stage to be reached. Hence, Gregory explains that when Paul says that he was "always bearing the dying of Jesus in his own body"³⁹ he, in a sense, "lived in dying",⁴⁰ as he at every point "was going over into a new life, dying to the past and forgetting things that were already over and done". For the same reasons the bride in the *Song of Songs* does not find a stopping place in her progress toward the better.⁴¹

As such, the knitting together of contraries by the multiform wisdom of God in practice comes together with the human engagement with *apophasis*. In what we are accustomed to talk of as *epektasis*, the never-ending reaching out for the good, the person who follows Christ at every point dies from what is possessed, in order to reach forward to what is beyond. Such never-ending progress implies an epistemological element of *apophasis*.⁴²

4 The Role of the Church

Salvation is, says Gregory, not first of all something effected by precepts in the way of teaching (ἐκ τῆς κατὰ διδασχὴν ὑφηγησέως), as by the actual deeds of Christ.⁴³ But salvation is realized as human beings follow the Word by imitating and following Christ.⁴⁴ By such imitation a new humanity, renewed from above after the image of its creator, is fashioned, says Gregory. This new humanity is the church, a "new cosmos", a race of "heavenly lights" renewed by "the birth

37 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 353; tr. Norris 372,22–25).

38 As Maspero puts it, "[a]pophatism is, in its most profound essence, conversion", G. Maspero, *Trinity and Man: Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabium*, Leiden 2007, 144.

39 2Cor 4.10.

40 2Cor 6.9.

41 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 367; tr. Norris 386,5–6).

42 E.g. *Vit Moys II* (GNO VII 239); *Eun I* 420–422 (GNO I 149).

43 *Or cat* (GNO III/4 35).

44 *Vit Moys II* (GNO VII 252); *Cant XII* (GNO VI 356; tr. Norris 376,13).

from above”, as Gregory puts it.⁴⁵ The church is the light of the cosmos (here understood as the whole inhabited world), says Gregory with reference to Mt 5.14–16 and Phil 2.15.

The new heaven and earth are revealed in the church, which was established as the body of the invisible God. Just as the “invisible beauty” and “wellspring of wisdom” can be inferred by contemplating the singlefold wisdom revealed in the perceptible cosmos, Christ can be seen in the new cosmos that appears in the creation of the church.⁴⁶ The members of the cosmos which is the church are, says Gregory, as suns that light up “the inhabited world with the beams of good works”.⁴⁷ In this way, just as the wisdom of God can be seen through the beauty of the created world (by general revelation), through the church can be seen “the One who is and is becoming all in all” (by particular revelation), as the good works of the members of the church directs the knowledge of those who behold it towards “that which cannot be contained” (πρὸς τὸ ἀχώρητον).⁴⁸

When we speak of Christ as the head of the church, we are not referring “to the Deity in its eternity but to the human being that received the Deity” (the incarnated Christ).⁴⁹ Only in an indirect, apophatic way does the church reveal the incomprehensible nature of God. The nature of God is not made comprehensible in any positive sense through the church, but the church works as the means for an indirect, apophatic conception of God. To the degree that the knowledge of God is a communal task, participation in the life of the church is also a matter of negative theology.⁵⁰ As *apophasis* can be considered a human analogy of the multiform wisdom of God, the practice of negative theology is the task of the church alongside the positive imitation of Christ, by which the economy of salvation, God’s multiform wisdom, is made known to the whole world, through the good works of the church.

45 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 385; tr. Norris 406,1).

46 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 386; tr. Norris 406,18–19).

47 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 385; tr. Norris 406,12).

48 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 386; tr. Norris 406,21). According to Mark W. Elliot “The reference here is to the Word visible in his new creation, the Church. That suggests Gregory believed in a close association here and now, of the invisible’s being wrapped up in the mass of believers, ubiquitous as far as the limits of the faithful. Yet it is not an aesthetic or visible revelation; the Groom is revealed to onlookers by the virtues of the souls, which are really his own virtues, as described in *Cant* 5:10 ff.” M.W. Elliot, *The Song of Songs and Christology in the Early Church*, 381–451, Tübingen 2000, 97.

49 *Cant* XIII (GNO VI 391; tr. Norris 412,10).

50 C. Yannaras, “Apophatic Theology”, Vol. 1, in: E. Fahlbusch—J. Milič Lochman—J. Mbiti—J. Pelikan—L. Vischer (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Leiden 1999, 105.

The church lights up the world as it imitates Christ. But the light of the church does not reveal the nature of God in any positive sense. But as the imitation of Christ reveals the multiform wisdom of God, the church points indirectly to the incomprehensible nature of God, who hides in darkness, as Gregory often describes it (e.g., in *On the Life of Moses*). It is in this way that the cosmos in Rm 1.20, understood as the church, is the medium of particular rather than general revelation.

Bibliography

- Barth, K. *Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed., Oxford 1933.
- Collins, R. *Understanding Atonement: A New and Orthodox Theory*, Grantham 1995.
- Dunn, J.D.G. *Romans 1–8. Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 38a, Dallas 1988.
- Elliot, M.W. *The Song of Songs and Christology in the Early Church, 381–451*, Tübingen 2000.
- Gaca, K.L.—L.L. Welborn (eds.). *Early Patristic Readings of Romans*, New York 2006.
- Karfiková, L.—S. Douglass—J. Zachhuber (eds.). *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II (Olomouc, September 15–18, 2004)*, Leiden 2007.
- Maspero, G. *Trinity and Man: Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabium*, Boston, MA, 2007.
- Mortley, R. *From Word to Silence II—The way of negation, Christian and Greek*, Bonn 1986.
- Norris, R.A. *Gregory of Nyssa, Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012.
- Ramelli, I. *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, Leiden 2013.
- Rogers, E.F. *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God*, Notre Dame 1995.
- Steenbuch, J. *Doing the Unthinkable* (unpublished PhD-dissertation), Copenhagen 2014.
- Yannaras, C. "Apophatic Theology", Vol. 1, in: E. Fahlbusch—J. Milič Lochman—J. Mbiti—J. Pelikan—L. Vischer (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Leiden 1999.
- Young, R.A. "The Knowledge of God in Romans 1:18–23: Exegetical and Theological reflections", *JETS* 43/4 (2000) 695–707.

Mixture, Beauty, and the Incarnation in Gregory's *In Canticum Canticorum*

Luke Steven

Antoine Lévy has argued that Christian thinkers began talking productively about beauty for the first time in the mid-fourth century. At this point, he says, the Cappadocians conflated Plotinus' aesthetics with the christocentric aesthetics of Macarian monasticism. Like Plotinus, the Cappadocians described an ascent towards intelligible Beauty; unlike Plotinus, they imagined this ascent to depend not on the endeavour of pioneering human intellects, but on the mediation of Christ, who, for the Cappadocians as for Macarius, is the face of divine Beauty itself. Lévy argues that this aesthetic model founded Byzantine aesthetics in general.¹ Here I want to take a first step towards the smaller suggestion that, just as the Cappadocians' aesthetic outlook is christological, so their christology exhibits aesthetic concerns. Specifically, I suggest that Gregory of Nyssa uses a vocabulary of "mixture" in order, partly, to convey the incarnation's beauty. Since Gregory gleaned his "mixture" language, as we will see, in a number of ways from a jumble of sources, it overflows with multiple connotations. Thankfully these have largely been untangled by scholars.² But it is my particular contention that amid this arrayed inheritance, Gregory puts to work a connotation of "mixture" that has gone unnoticed and that features throughout his *Homilies on the Song*: namely, beauty or fittingness—what I am calling, for the sake of ease and with no great theoretical baggage, "aesthetics". I will prove this by examining "mixture" first in the *Homilies* and secondly in some of Gregory's predecessors. Thirdly, I will show that Gregory applies this connotation creatively to the incarnation. Commentators have long dismissed Gregory's christological "mixture" language because to articulate it he thrice invoked the Aristotelian example of a mixture of "pre-dominance", where a

1 A. Lévy, "The Rise of the Beautiful in the 3rd and 4th Centuries: The Cappadocian Fathers and the Foundation of a Byzantine Aesthetics", *Nicolaus* 37 (2010) 149–172.

2 On Gregory and mixture see J.-R. Bouchet, "Le Vocabulaire de L'union et Du Rapport Des Natures Chez Saint Grégoire de Nysse", *Revue thomiste* 68 (1968) 533–582. Another useful piece, which highlights the sexual overtones of "mixture", is S. Coakley, "'Mingling' in Gregory of Nyssa's Christology: A Reconsideration", in: A. Schuele—G. Thomas (eds.), *Who is Jesus Christ for Us Today? Pathways to Contemporary Christology (a Festschrift for Michael Welker)*, Louisville (KY) 2009, 72–84.

drop is absorbed and disappears in a greater body of liquid³—through the lens of Chalcedon, this image could seem unforgivably Apollinarian.⁴ But I will suggest that the aesthetic evocations of “mixture”—overlooked, perhaps, because of this dismissal—show these passages in a more charitable and more accurate light.

In a passage from *Homily 1*, Gregory gives two definitions of the deeper reality behind the Song’s surface “account” (διασκευή). In the first Gregory defines the very enterprise that the *Song* narrates as “mixture”: “What is described in the *Song* is an account [τίς ... διασκευή] of a wedding, but what is intellectually discerned is the human soul’s mixing [ἀνάκρasis] with the divine”.⁵ Then comes the second definition: the *Song* “is an account [τίς ... διασκευή] of a marriage, through which it mediates to our yearning a desire for Beauty”.⁶ Taking these two definitions together, in the *Song*, mixture with God is what happens to someone when they desirously draw near to God’s Beauty. As this mixture’s product, the soul begins to manifest new kinds of beauty itself. One such kind, Gregory says here, is purity, attained by “mixing [ἀνάκρasis] with that which is inviolate and impassible” through, precisely, “desire [ἔρως] of divine Beauty”.⁷

If “mixture” is the deep subject matter of the *Song* and describes the encounter with Beauty it is unsurprising that it appears everywhere in Gregory’s homilies on the *Song* and brims with aesthetic resonances. Sometimes “mixture” has a negative aesthetic connotation. It can convey ugliness or contamination, especially when the ingredients involved are mutually inimical:⁸ in *Homily IV* Gregory says that before the fall “human nature was golden and gleaming because of its likeness to the undefiled Good [...] [but] later, by reason of the admixture [ἐπιμίξις] of evil, it became discoloured and dark”.⁹ More often, however, in Gregory’s florid ekphrastic passages, “mixture” illustrates beauty. He begins *Homily II* describing the tent of witness’ entrance veils, “whose beauty was mixed [συνεμίρνυτο] from every sort of handsome dye: gold thread gorgeously woven together with blue and purple and flaxen and scarlet [...] A

3 Aristotle, *De Generatione et Corruptione* 1, 10 328a (Loeb Classical Library 400, 260).

4 For a brief history and convincing critique of this dismissal, see B. Daley, “Divine Transcendence and Human Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa’s Anti-Apollinarian Christology”, in: S. Coakley (ed.), *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Oxford 2003, 67–76.

5 *Cant 1* (GNO VI 22,18–23,1). My translations of *Cant* are based on R.A. Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa, Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012.

6 *Cant 1* (GNO VI 23,16–17).

7 *Cant 1* (GNO VI 23,1–12).

8 Bouchet, “Le Vocabulaire de L’union et Du Rapport Des Natures Chez Saint Grégoire de Nysse”, 542.

9 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 100,16–19).

mixture [σύγκρατον] of all these, it made the brightness of the cloth shine like that of the rainbow".¹⁰ In *Homily* III, Gregory says that the bridegroom's friends seek to beautify his horse, mentioned in Ct 1.9, "by adorning the bosses of her gear with likenesses of gold, into which they etch the purity of silver, so that the beauty that adorns her may the more intensely shine forth when the gleam of silver is mixed [συγκιρναμένη] with the glitter of gold".¹¹ Then Gregory describes the perfume mentioned in the Song's next verses as "an artful and balanced mixture [τεχνική τις καὶ ἔμμετρος μίξις] of many different aromas".¹² In each case, and many more,¹³ Gregory elaborates these blends of every kind of good ingredient to *portray the virtuous life*, the life that blends all the virtues: as he summarises in *Homily* IX, "the soul gives off a fine fragrance on account of the [...] beautiful mixture [μίξις καλή] of the different virtues".¹⁴ By purifying its desires and focusing them upon Beauty the soul blooms with virtues, and Gregory paints images of *mixture* to stress that this bloom is itself very beautiful.

Aesthetic uses of mixture abound in Gregory's other works too, especially in the very early *On Virginity*¹⁵ and in the *Life of Moses*. For Gervase Mathew, the following passage from the *Life* exemplifies Gregory's aesthetic taste: "blue is interwoven with violet and scarlet mingled [μίγνυται] with white and among them is woven threads of gold; the variety of colours shine with a remarkable beauty".¹⁶ Mathew suggests that this "delight in complicated combinations of colours or of scents" reflects the tastes in fashion in Theodosius' court, where Gregory honed his oratorical career. He does not evidence this claim but is nonetheless right to look to Gregory's intellectual and cultural context as the source of his aesthetic predilections. The two aestheticians that Lévy says are most influential for Gregory, Plotinus and Macarius,¹⁷ both propound mixture as an aesthetic term in ways that are indeed picked up by Gregory. In his treatise *On Beauty*, Plotinus is clear that ugliness results from μίξις and κρᾶσις of

10 *Cant* II (GNO VI 44,2–7).

11 *Cant* III (GNO VI 83,14–18).

12 *Cant* III (GNO VI 89,8–9).

13 *Cant* VI (GNO VI 188,12–189,4); IX (GNO VI 270,7–11; GNO VI 271,16–22); X (GNO VI 306,11–15); XIV (GNO VI 426,1–4).

14 *Cant* IX (GNO VI 268,7–10).

15 *Virg* III (GNO VIII/1 259,4–10); VIII (GNO VIII/1 284,27–285,8); XIII (GNO VIII/1 303,23–304,10); XXIII (GNO VIII/1 339,1–22).

16 *Vit Moys* II, 95 (GNO VII/1 101,4–8), G. Mathew, "The Aesthetic Theories of Gregory of Nyssa", in: G. Robertson—G. Henderson (eds.), *Studies in Memory of David Talbot Rice*, Edinburgh 1975, 219.

17 It is the scholarly consensus that the Macarian corpus influenced Gregory, not the other way around. See M. Mira, "Macarius", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden-Boston 2010, 465.

immaterial with material, of soul with body.¹⁸ Gregory often subverts this language to express the *good integrity* of the human body/soul compound, as in *On the Making of Man*,¹⁹ and equally subversively deploys Plotinus' analogy here of contaminated gold to express the Christian doctrine of the fall, as we have seen at the beginning of *Homily* IV. For Macarius mixture can identify either ugliness or (in the same passage) the beauty of the soul unified with Christ:

It is lovely [ἀγαπητόν] when the soul, devoting herself wholly to the Lord [...], is permitted to be [...] one mixture [χρᾶσις] with him [...]. But if a man gives himself away to cares, or glory, or power, or human honours, [...] his soul is defiled and mixed [κεκράτηται] with earthly considerations [...].²⁰

Interestingly, Macarius paints this picture with the language of the *Song*:

The face of the soul is unveiled, and it gazes upon the heavenly Bridegroom face to face in a spiritual light that cannot be described, in all certainty being mixed [ἀνακτενωμένη] with him [...].²¹

In non-theological aesthetic discourse of Gregory's day, too, "mixture" could signal beauty. Hermogenes of Tarsus was a second century rhetorician and a founder of byzantine rhetorical theory, who probably influenced notable rhetoricians and friends of the Cappadocians like Libanius.²² Hermogenes prized μίξις as the mark of supremely beautiful speech. Whereas most rhetors master and then intractably heed their own favourite style, Hermogenes says, the ancient rhetor Demosthenes surpassed them all as follows: "by mixing each of the other types [of style] [...] he diversifies his style [...] and creates a unity in

18 Plotinus, *Enneades* I, 6,5 (*Plotini Opera* I, 97–99).

19 *Op hom* II (PG 44 133B); VI (PG 44 138D–140C). See also *Infant* (GNO III/2 77,12–20).

20 Macarius of Egypt, *Homily* 9, 12 (PG 34 540AB); translation is based on A. Mason, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius the Egyptian*, London-New York 1921, 74.

21 Macarius of Egypt, *Homily* X, 4 (PG 34 544B); translation is based on Mason, 78.

22 C.A. Gibson, "The Agenda of Libanius' Hypotheses to Demosthenes", *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 40 (1999) 179, 185–186; M. Johansson, "Libanius' Declamations 9 and 10", *Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia* 67 (2005) 308. Libanius often speaks of mixtures of different kinds of rhetorical speech, e.g. "acclamation mingled with supplication" (εὐφημιῶν ἀναμίξαντες βετελείας), *Oration* XXII, 17 (Loeb Classical Library 452, 386); perhaps this betrays his awareness of the model of mixture in *De Ideis* (see footnote 22).

which all the various types [of style] are interwoven. Thus from all the beauties of style, this one, the Demosthenic, the most beautiful, has been created".²³

There will be a number of concepts in every culture and language that have a basic or scientific meaning of their own, but additionally (and sometimes for no good or obvious reason) seem natively delightful and beautiful (think of the words "symmetry", "equality", "blossom", "experience"). Our exploration so far has found an example of just such a notion in Gregory's mind and his cultural and philosophical landscape: for him, "mixture" is a concept alive with surplus suggestions of beauty. If this is the case, then when Gregory calls the *incarnation* a "mixture", are there connotations of beauty close at hand, connotations that Gregory hopes might delight his audience and draw their desire to understand? Yes, is my short answer, and it falls now to focus on two christological themes—light and darkness, and fittingness—that show forth how the concept of "mixture", in its witness to beauty, complements Gregory's christological reflection and argument.

Light is maybe the most widespread and powerful aesthetic category in late-antiquity, summoning cognate notions of goodness, beauty, and purity. Gregory often uses "mixture" to express light's beauty, as in many of the citations presented so far, and in other places, especially his Easter sermons, where he repeatedly presents the neoplatonic image of a multitude of lights mixing to emit a single light.²⁴ But for Christians light and darkness language was at once aesthetic *and* christological thanks to texts like the prologue of John's gospel. It is little wonder, then, that when Gregory describes the beauty of the light that penetrates the world's darkness in the incarnation, "mixture" often attends. "Since our humanity was in darkness, he who shone in our darkened nature [...] accommodated our entire humanity to his own light, and brought it to completion in himself by that mixture [ἀνάχρασις] which he himself is".²⁵ Or again, in *Homily v* Gregory says that at the incarnation the Word's full light streams into the Bride's chamber: there "comes the Light's perfect illumination, when, by its mixing [συνανάχρασις] with our nature, the true Light shows itself to those who

23 Hermogenes of Tarsus, *De Ideis* (*Hermogenis Opera*, 221,16–23 [see also 279,20–26], tr. C.W. Wooten, *Hermogenes' On Types of Style*, Chapel Hill 1987, 5).

24 *Trid spat* (GNO IX 273,10–274,7; 297). In another Easter sermon, *Sanct Pasch* (GNO IX 309,21–310,4), Gregory paints a similar picture, this time of the church's candles mixing with the light of morning to make one perpetual day. On the neoplatonic heritage of this mixture model, see S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*, Leiden 1978, 197.

25 *Epist III* (GNO VIII/2 23,25–31), translation is based on A. Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters*, Leiden 2007, 127–128.

are in darkness”.²⁶ So much does Gregory appreciate the aesthetic usefulness of “mixture” in this Johanine christological context that, in a rare moment of agreement, he recommends Apollinarius’ use of “mixture” to elucidate John’s prologue.²⁷

Finally, I want to suggest that Gregory often selects “mixture” to describe the incarnation in particular *because* it expresses its *fittingness*—another crucial aesthetic theme in late-antiquity, if not in ancient Greek sensibility in general.²⁸ Consider this passage from *Letter III*:

[T]he power of the Most High, being mixed [ἐγκραθεῖσα] with our entire nature through the coming of the Holy Spirit, came to be both in our soul, since it was fitting [εἰκός] that it should come to be in the soul, and came also to be mixed [καταμίγνυται] with the body, so that our salvation might be wholly perfect in all respects, while that heavenly and God-befitting [θεοπρεπής] passionlessness was nonetheless preserved [...].²⁹

Here mixture is the key to ensuring the incarnation’s fittingness, and its harmony with what is θεοπρεπής, “God-befitting”. For Gregory and his predecessors, θεοπρεπής denoted all the names properly assigned to God: “good”, “powerful”, “wise”, “just”, and “holy” amongst others.³⁰ Gregory considers mixture a means to confess the presence of these divine characteristics, redemptively transform-

26 *Cant* V (GNO VI 145,6–9).

27 *Antirr*h (GNO III/1 217,15–21).

28 Gregory witnesses to this understanding of “the fitting” (the key vocabulary being το πρέπον and cognates) as an aesthetic concept, that is, as a concept deeply involved in beauty. Here are two pithy examples from his *Or cat* of how Gregory can speak of “beauty” (or “goodness”, το καλόν) and “fittingness” (το πρέπον) as near synonyms: “everything that falls within the realm of the beautiful is fitting to God” (GNO III/4 37,16–17, my translation); “if what happened [i.e. the incarnation] was beautiful and fitting to God why did he delay his good work?” (GNO III/4 72,16–17, my translation). In *Cant* there are at least two interesting indications that “fittingness” has a specific aesthetic role, namely, as the marker of “glory” or of proper display and appearance. First, in three of his closing prayers Gregory writes of “glory” as that which “befits” Jesus Christ or God (*Cant* VIII [GNO VI 261,3–4]; *Cant* X [GNO VI 314,10]; *Cant* XII [GNO VI 370,12]). Secondly, “fittingness” is the instructor of what to wear, or good “dress-sense”: for example, the rule of “fittingness” preserves the “glory” that women find in wearing their hair long (1 Cor 11.15), and that the soul finds in dressing itself, “as befits women”, in “modesty and temperance” (1 Tim 2.9–10) (*Cant* VII [GNO VI 220,4–15]); or again, there are certain “fitting” garments for the divine wedding feast that souls must wear to meet the Bridegroom (*Cant* I [GNO VI 15,4–6]).

29 *Epist* III (GNO VIII/2 26,2–11), translation is based on A. Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa. The Letters*, 130.

30 E.g. *Eust* (GNO III/1 6,8–11); *Abl* (GNO III/1 55,14–19). For a summary of this theme in Gre-

ing all aspects of Jesus' humanity, *without* diminishing them into the precariousness of mortal existence.

We are now in a position to re-evaluate why Gregory controversially thrice employs the Aristotelian and Stoic image of a mixture of pre-dominance: the drop of vinegar in the ocean.³¹ Consider the passage from *Against Apollinarius*:

It remains to consider what is most reasonably befitting [εὐλογώτερον] of God, what would accord with the goal of love of humanity. *And this consists not in discovering God's own name, but in naming [God] with that which abounds and dominates—like the ocean.* Now if someone were to cast a drop of vinegar into the ocean, the drop would become ocean, being transformed by the quality [ποιότης] of ocean; in the same way the true Son and only-begotten God, *the inaccessible light, the self-living wisdom, holiness, power, and every lofty name and conception*—the one who is all these things was manifested to humans in the flesh, and the flesh, really flesh by its own nature, was transformed into the ocean of immortality; just as the apostle says, “the mortal was swallowed up by life” (cf. 2 Cor 5.4). So every fleshly manifestation is together transformed into the divine and undefiled nature [...] [and] the lowliness of fleshly nature is taken up into the divine properties by mixing [ἀνάκρασις] with God.³²

There are certain names that reasonably befit God, often referred to as τὰ θεο-πρεπῆ ὀνόματα. Here Gregory lists a few: “inaccessible light”, “self-living wisdom”, and so on. But crucially, he begins by reasoning that one can condense these God-befitting names, themselves creaturely analogies of God's inexpressible nature,³³ into a single God-befitting analogy: *the ocean*. By extension, to speak fittingly of God's presence in Jesus, one should speak in oceanic terms; *this* is why Gregory picks the image of an ocean adopting a drop of alien substance—not to depict an obliteration of Christ's humanity, as has often been assumed, but rather to ensure Christ's undiminished God-befittingness. By preserving God-befitting “properties” [ιδιώματα], redemptively pre-dominating or “transforming” Christ's humanity,³⁴ Gregory can rebut Apollinarius

gory and his predecessors see A. Meredith, “God-Fittingness in Gregory Nyssa”, *Studia Patristica* 18 (1989), 507–513.

31 For an example of a Stoic appropriation of this model, see Plutarch, *De Communibus Notitiis adversus Stoicos* 37 (*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* II, 480).

32 *Antirrh* (GNO III/1 201,6–24), my translation.

33 See *Cant* I (GNO VI 36,12–37,9).

34 On this theme see B. Daley, “Divine Transcendence” 69–73, and Coakley, “‘Mingling’”, 76–79.

who, he thinks, corrupts or divides Christ's divinity by attributing to it fleshliness and mortality.³⁵ In Gregory's two other uses of the analogy the same logic obtains, with special clarity in *Ad Theophilum*:

The first-fruits of the human nature which he has taken up—absorbed, one might say figuratively—by the omnipotent divinity like a drop of vinegar mingled in the boundless sea, exist in the Godhead, *but not in their own distinctive characteristics* [ιδιώματα]. For a duality of Sons might consistently be presumed if a nature of a different kind could be recognized [...] within the ineffable Godhead of the Son—as being weak or small or perishable or temporary, *as opposed to powerful and great and imperishable and eternal*. But since all the traits we recognize in the mortal [nature] we see *transformed by the characteristics* [ιδιώματα] *of the Godhead* [...]—for whatever one sees in the Son is Godhead: *wisdom, power, holiness, apatheia*—how could one divide what is one into double significance [...]?³⁶

Again, Gregory deploys *this* mixture analogy *because* it keeps the incarnation God-befitting, expressing Jesus' human nature flooded with the oceanic properties of God—with what is “powerful and great and imperishable and eternal”, or with “Life and Power” as he says in the remaining instance of the ocean analogy.³⁷

To summarise, for Gregory, “mixture” is a notion that readily conjures beauty, and this is most clear in his *Homilies on the Song*. I have suggested that Gregory often so confidently summons “mixture” to elaborate the incarnation because of this connotation, to ensure God's redeeming beauty and fittingness displayed therein.

Bibliography

- Bouchet, J.-R. “Le Vocabulaire de L'union et Du Rapport Des Natures Chez Saint Grégoire de Nyse”, *Revue thomiste* 68 (1968) 533–582.
- Coakley, S. “‘Mingling’ in Gregory of Nyssa's Christology: A Reconsideration”, in: A. Schuele—G. Thomas (eds.), *Who is Jesus Christ for Us Today? Pathways to Con-*

35 See Daley's summary of this argument against Apollinarius, “Divine Transcendence”, 68–69.

36 *Theoph* (GNO III/1 126,14–127,10), translated in Coakley, “‘Mingling’”, 75–76 (my italics).

37 *Eun* III/3 68–69 (GNO II 132–133).

- temporary Christology (a Festschrift for Michael Welker)*, Louisville (KY) 2009, 72–84.
- Daley, B. “Divine Transcendence and Human Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa’s Anti-Apollinarian Christology”, in: S. Coakley (ed.), *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Oxford 2003, 67–76.
- Gersh, S. *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*, Leiden 1978.
- Gibson, C.A. “The Agenda of Libanius’ Hypotheses to Demosthenes”, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 40 (1999) 171–202.
- Johansson, M. “Libanius’ Declamations 9 and 10”, *Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia* 67 (2005) 291–308.
- Lévy, A. “The Rise of the Beautiful in the 3rd and 4th Centuries: The Cappadocian Fathers and the Foundation of a Byzantine Aesthetics”, *Nicolaus* 37 (2010) 149–172.
- Mason, A. *Fifty Spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius the Egyptian*, London-New York 1921.
- Mathew, G. “The Aesthetic Theories of Gregory of Nyssa”, in: G. Robertson—G. Henderson (eds.), *Studies in Memory of David Talbot Rice*, Edinburgh 1975, 217–222.
- Meredith, A. “God-Fittingness in Gregory Nyssa”, *Studia Patristica* 18 (1989), 507–513.
- Mira, M. “Macarius”, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden-Boston 2010, 465.
- Wooten, C.W. *Hermogenes’ On Types of Style*, Chapel Hill 1987.

Gregory of Nyssa on Bodily and Spiritual Pleasure in *In Canticum Canticorum*

Siiri Toiviainen

While much has been said about Gregory of Nyssa's notion of desire, his understanding of pleasure has never been submitted to scholarly analysis. This is despite the fact that ἡδονή, the Greek word for pleasure, appears in his writings more than 300 times. A conference on Gregory's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* provides an excellent opportunity for a brief discussion on the role of pleasure in Gregory's thought. It is, after all, a work in which the passion of erotic love, "the most intense of pleasurable activities" (τὸ σφοδρότατον τῶν καθ' ἡδονὴν ἐνεργουμένων), "is set as a figure at the very fore of the guidance that the teachings give".¹ Such a focus inevitably leads to situations in which Gregory must clarify the dangers of reading the *Song* as an exaltation of corporeal pleasure and, at the same time, explain in what way pleasure can serve as an image of the soul's intimacy with God.

In this article, I will use as my springboard a passage in *Homily 10* where Gregory discusses a double pleasure, "one that is in the soul and is activated by impassibility and another that is occasioned in the body by passion".² I will examine the two kinds of pleasure asking, in particular, what makes pleasure of the soul different from its bodily counterpart. My focus will be on Gregory's *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, but at times I will allude to other works for further examples. Since Gregory is constantly on guard against the perils of pleasure, I will first offer an overview of what, exactly, makes pleasure dangerous in his opinion. I will show that sensual pleasure obscures what is truly good and leads to a frustrating pursuit of things that offer only fleeting satisfaction. Then, drawing attention to parallels within the Platonist tradition, I will explain how Gregory envisions a type of spiritual pleasure that has been stripped of these negative characteristics. I will argue that by conceptualising the eschatological union as a mutually enforcing cycle of desire and enjoyment, Gregory departs from the Platonist mainstream where the highest pleasures are understood to be free from pain and striving.

1 *Cant I* (GNO VI 27,5–8; tr. Norris 29).

2 *Cant X* (GNO VI 313,17–19; tr. Norris 329).

1 Notes on Vocabulary

The idea that the advanced states of the spiritual life will yield pleasure is not just a fruit of Gregory's mature thought. Expressions such as "the divine and blessed pleasure" (τὴν θείαν τε καὶ μακαρίαν ἡδονήν) occur already in *De virginitate*, which otherwise takes a particularly stern attitude towards earthly pleasures.³ In a sense, the fact that pleasure can be both negative and positive should not surprise us. Pleasure is, after all, the fulfilment of desire, and Gregory is famous for his understanding of twofold desire which, depending on the mind's choosing, can be directed towards both good and harmful ends.⁴ The close relationship between desire and pleasure is highlighted in Macrina's definition of desire in *De anima et resurrectione*: "Again, if we were to define what desire (ἐπιθυμίαν) is in itself, we shall call it a seeking for what one lacks (ἐνδέοντος), or a yearning for the enjoyment of some pleasure (πόθον τῆς καθ' ἡδονήν ἀπολαύσεως), or a grief (λύπην) when something on which we have set our heart is not in our power, or a habituation towards some pleasure (πρὸς τὸ ἡδὺ σχέσιν) which it is not possible to enjoy".⁵

However, despite frequent allusions to spiritually productive ἐπιθυμία, spiritual ἡδονή is rarely mentioned in Gregory's works. Even though Gregory will frequently highlight the pleasurable and joyful character of the soul's union with the divine, he appears reluctant to refer to this state as ἡδονή. The word retains a predominantly negative value throughout his corpus. Instead he prefers such words as "joy" (εὐφροσύνη, χαρά), "delight" (τρυφή), or simply "enjoyment" (ἀπόλαυσις), which he employs somewhat interchangeably.

Gregory's desire to avoid the term ἡδονή is understandable and by no means unique. ἡδονή is, after all, the loaded term of ancient discourse on hedonism, and in Gregory's works it typically denotes pleasure that is mistakenly pursued as the good. Terminological distinctions between the base and bodily ἡδονή and

3 *Virg* V,16–17 (GNO VIII/1 277; SC 119, 336). The expression forms an interesting paradox by connecting "blessedness", the ultimate goal of human life, with "pleasure", which Gregory normally views as a dangerous competing goal. Concerning "blessedness", see F. Mann, "Zur Wortgruppe μακαρ- in De beatitudinibus, in übrigen Werk Gregors von Nyssa und im Lexicon Gregorianum", in: H.R. Drobner—A. Viciano (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes: An English Version with Commentary and Supporting Studies*, Leiden 2000, 331–358. For similar expressions, see *An et res* (GNO III/3 42); *Inscr* 12; 13 (GNO V 28,25; 30,15); *Mort* (GNO IX 67,1–5); *Virg* V,1 (GNO VIII/1 278; SC 119, 338,29–30); *Virg* IX,2 (GNO VIII/1 288; SC 119, 368,22–23).

4 Concerning the two directions of desire in Gregory, see, for example, J.W. Smith, *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa*, New York 2004, 78–82.

5 *An et res* (GNO III/3 37; tr. Silvas 192).

its intellectual counterpart are common in ancient literature. The Stoics offer probably the strictest demarcation between ἡδονή, one of the four primary passions, and χαρά, a purely rational “good emotion” which can be found in the dispassionate soul of the sage.⁶ Attempts to separate ἡδονή from its virtuous counterparts occur also in the Platonist tradition. Even Plato, who is generally happy to use ἡδονή for the more noble pleasures, suggests at times that there is a difference between a sensual ἡδονή and a more refined and intellectual ἐυφροσύνη.⁷ Similar distinctions can be found in later Platonists, including Clement of Alexandria, who forms a probable link between Gregory and the Greek philosophical tradition.⁸

Against this background, we can appreciate the directness of Gregory’s statement concerning pleasure in *Homily 10*:

For in the human constitution there is a double pleasure (διπλῆς [...] ἡδονῆς), one that is in the soul and is activated by impassibility and another that is occasioned in the body by passion, and whichever of the two our choosing shall elect is the one that prevails over the other. Thus if one focuses attention on sense perception (αἴσθησιν) and seeks for oneself the pleasure (ἡδονήν) it grafts into the body, one’s life is spent without tasting the divine gladness (τῆς θείας εὐφροσύνης), since the better is automatically overshadowed by the worse. But for those whose desire (ἐπιθυμία) flows in the direction of the divine, the good (τὸ ἀγαθόν) stands unshadowed, and judgment flees everything that bewitches the senses (αἴσθησιν). Hence it is that the soul, when its only delight (εὐφραίνηται) lies in contemplation of what is real, wakens to none of the pleasurable stirrings of the senses (οὐδὲν [...] τῶν ἐνεργουμένων καθ’ ἡδονὴν δι’ αἰσθήσεως). It has put to sleep every corporeal notion, and wakened by the divine, it embraces the revelation of God by pure and naked thought.⁹

Although here, too, Gregory eventually veers towards equating spiritual pleasure with ἐυφροσύνη, it is clear that he understands the latter as a form of ἡδονή. To understand how the pleasure of the soul differs from that of the body, let us first investigate what, precisely, makes bodily pleasure problematic in Gregory’s view.

6 For a list of the Stoic *eupatheiai*, see DL VII,116 (cited in L/S 65F).

7 Plato, *Protagoras* 337c; *Timaeus* 80b. See also D. Wolfsdorf, *Pleasure in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, Cambridge 2013, 11–12.

8 See, for example, Clement, *Stromata* VII,16,101,3.

9 *Cant x* (GNO VI 313,17–314,7; tr. Norris 329–331).

2 Bodily Pleasure and the Good

One of the key topics of Gregory's homilies on the *Song* is the pursuit of that which is truly good and beautiful (τὸ ἀγαθόν, καλόν). As we learn from the work, the good that the soul searches is intelligible, and it can only be attained by a soul that has left behind the temptations of the sensible realm. Unfortunately, many people miss the mark. Instead of intellectual reflection on the nature of things, they latch on to sensory appearances: whatever appears to be pleasing to the senses is judged as good and, consequently, pursued as the good.¹⁰ However, sensual pleasure is not a sufficient criterion for determining what is truly good because sensation offers merely a superficial snapshot of how an object appears at a certain time. Warren Smith puts the matter succinctly:

[S]ince sense perceptions are no more reliable than the fluctuations of the material object perceived, the judgments based on sense perception are equally unreliable. Thus one cannot trust that an object that appears beautiful at one time and under one set of circumstances will appear just as lovely at another time and under other circumstances.¹¹

Since pleasure obscures and replaces the true intelligible good, Gregory regards it as the source of all sin. In *Homily 12*, Gregory attributes the Fall to pleasure seeking, calling pleasure "the instigator of all vicious actions".¹² Enticed by the pleasing exterior of the forbidden fruit, the first humans label it as good "because of an erroneous judgment regarding what is good, for such it seems to people who identify the good with pleasure" (κατὰ τὴν ἡμαρτημένην τοῦ καλοῦ κρίσιν τοῖς τὸ καλὸν ἐν ἡδονῇ τιθεμένοις τοιοῦτος δοκῶν). Soon, however, the fruit reveals its bitter core by bringing about sin and death.¹³

Gregory uses the tangible notion of the ambiguous fruit to illustrate a more abstract idea: unlike the actual absolute goods, all false goods are in some ways diminished by the presence of their opposite. One of Gregory's persistent complaints about pleasure, the chief offender among false goods, is that it is always

10 See the following passage from *Cant* and also *Op hom XX* (PG 44 200B).

11 Smith, *Passion and Paradise*, 194.

12 See also *Vit Moys* II, 297 (GNO VII/1135–136), and compare both to Basil, *Asceticon magnum* 17 (PG 31, 964,20–22) and Plato, *Timaeus* 69d.

13 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 350,7–19; tr. Norris 369–371). See also the central place of pleasure in Gregory's interpretation of the Fall in *Op hom XIX–XX* (PG 44 196–201) and *Or cat XXI* (SC 453, 244).

mixed with pain (λύπη), its opposite, and can never offer complete satisfaction.¹⁴ The mixing of pleasure and pain takes many forms: in *In Canticum*, the pleasing exterior of the fruit conceals the painful reality of sin and death. In *De virginitate*, the pleasures of marriage are tainted by death and grief.¹⁵ In several works, Gregory highlights the frustration and anxiety that take hold of people who seek happiness in the mutable phenomena of this world which can only offer fleeting moments of satisfaction.¹⁶ And finally, all bodily pleasures are limited by “satiety” (κόρος), which, for Gregory, does not denote merely “having enough” but has connotations of aversion and disgust as the desired object loses its appeal.¹⁷

The idea that ordinary pleasures are mixed with pain is a common complaint in Plato and subsequent Platonist authors.¹⁸ In the *Philebus*, Socrates makes a distinction between the lesser “mixed pleasures” (τὰς μειχθείσας ἡδονάς) and the higher “unmixed pleasures” (τὰς ἀμείκτους), based on whether the pleasure precedes or follows a perceptibly painful lack. The former are disqualified from any association with the good life since they are accompanied by pain, whose violence is a symptom of an unbridled appetite. The latter, on the other hand, are purely and truly pleasurable because they are neither preceded nor followed by pain.¹⁹ For Socrates, this class of pleasures does not pertain exclusively to intellectual matters. Most smells and sounds yield true pleasure, as do pure colours and geometric shapes. However, we should note that even these pleasures of the perceptible world are truly pleasant because they arise from things that “are not beautiful in a relative sense (οὐκ εἶναι πρὸς τι καλὰ), as others are, but are by their very nature forever beautiful by themselves (ἀεὶ καλὰ καθ’ αὐτὰ πεφυκέναι).”²⁰

14 For the point that false goods are lacking because mixed with their opposites, see A. Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity*, Oxford 2009, 190–192.

15 *Virg* III (GNO VIII/1 291; SC 119, 280).

16 See, for example, *Beat* IV (GNO VII/2 119–120); *Or dom* IV (GNO VII/2 51–52).

17 Concerning the notion of κόρος, see M. Harl, “Recherches sur l’origénisme d’Origène: la satiété (koros) de la contemplation comme motif de la chute des âmes”, *StPatr* 8 (1966) 373–405, and J.J. Helm “‘Koros’: From Satisfaction to Greed”, *The Classical World* 87 (1993) 5–11. For κόρος in Gregory, see also Smith, *Passion and Paradise*, 104–125.

18 See *Phaedo* 60b–c. For a later Platonist discussion on the mixing of pleasure and pain, see, for example, Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertationes* xxx, 4.

19 *Philebus* 31b–52c. For a scholarly analysis of the mixed pleasures in Plato, see Wolfsdorf, *Pleasure in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, 74–102.

20 *Philebus* 51c (tr. Frede 441), in: J.M. Cooper (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works*, Indianapolis 1997.

Why are pain and pleasure so closely linked? First, we should keep in mind that pleasure is often understood as a fulfilment of desire, and for many ancient writers desire is a type of pain caused by a lack.²¹ Second, due to the instability of the material world, bodily pleasure, like all material phenomena, is always bound up with its opposite.²² As Gregory sums up elsewhere, the changeable is “always in the process of becoming what it is not”.²³ The true good, on the other hand, is unmixed with its opposite and thus absolutely good.²⁴

3 Pleasure, Pain, and Epektasis

Now, perhaps, we can understand why Gregory considers pleasure so harmful that he rarely uses the word to denote spiritual enjoyment at all. At the same time, we can also begin to anticipate what sorts of factors might characterise the spiritual equivalent that must, in some way, transcend the problems of bodily pleasure. First of all, as we read in the passage on double pleasure in *Homily* 10, spiritual pleasure is not contingent upon the body and its senses. It is the senses of the soul that act as receptacles of spiritual pleasure.²⁵ When the soul embraces the revelation of God with “pure and naked thought” and the “judgment flees everything that bewitches the senses”, things are evaluated correctly in their very essence. Unlike the pleasure of the body, which obscures the true

21 See Macrina's definition of desire at the beginning of this article. Similarly, Clement of Alexandria defines desire as “some pain” (λύπη τις) (*Stromata* 111,5,42,1–2).

22 This Platonic notion, known as the “compresence of opposites”, entails that a sensible thing is always only relatively good because despite its good features it also carries something of the opposite. See Plato, *Phaedo* 102b; *Respublica* 478c–479d. On the fluctuations of bodily pleasure, see, for example, *Beat* IV (GNO VII/2 120); *Eccl* 11 8 (GNO V 313–314; SC 416 180).

23 *Inscr* 1 8 (GNO V 52,24–25).

24 For the compresence of opposites in the goods of the sensible world contrasted with the simplicity and absolute goodness of the true good, see Gregory's discussion in *Mort* (GNO IX 29–31). For the absolute, stable and unmixed goodness of the true good, see also, for example, *Beat* IV (GNO VII/2 111,17–20); *Eccl* 11 8 (GNO V 313,15–314,3; SC 416 182); *Mort* (GNO IX 29,24–30,7); *Op hom* XX (PG 44 200C).

25 In *Cant* I (GNO VI 34), Gregory describes a “double sensation” much in the same manner as the “double pleasure” later in the same work. I am not persuaded by Sarah Coakley's claim that in *In Canticum* Gregory alludes to transformed physical senses when he discusses the senses of the soul (see S. Coakley, “Gregory of Nyssa”, in: P.L. Gavriluk—S. Coakley (eds.), *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, Cambridge 2011, 36–55). I offer a more thorough critique of Coakley's argument in my PhD thesis: *The Instigator of All Vicious Actions: Pleasure, Sin, and the Good Life in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa*, University of Durham, 2017, *pro manuscripto*, 296–312.

good, pleasure of the soul is aligned with the good which now “stands unshadowed”: the only source of delight is the very thing that the mind rightly judges as the Good.²⁶

So far, we have learned that bodily pleasure ebbs and flows without offering lasting satisfaction. It is characterised by the same mutability as the body through which it is experienced. However, in the intelligible realm, desire and pleasure no longer follow each other in a sequence that finally ceases in satiety before starting again; instead, they increase side by side. Gregory summarises this dynamic in *Homily 14 on the Song of Songs* saying: “The enjoyment (ἀπόλαυσις) [...] did not check desire through satiety; rather, it nourished longing by affording a taste of what desire seeks”.²⁷ Similarly, in *Homily 1*, Gregory refers to “that Good that alone is truly pleasant and desirable and lovable and whose enjoyment (ἀπόλαυσις) is the ever-available opportunity of a yet nobler desiring because by participation in good things it stretches and expands our longing”.²⁸ Although in these passages Gregory does not refer to spiritual pleasure as ἡδονή, it is obvious that what he is discussing is the spiritual equivalent of bodily pleasure.

As Smith has noted, the mutually enforcing cycle of desire and pleasure which Gregory presents in *In Canticum* reflects his general notion of *epektasis*, the eternal progress of the soul in the infinite God.²⁹ Since ἐπιθυμία is fuelled by lack and the infinite God can never be fully grasped, it is logical that desiring continues even in the eschaton. But if we compare Gregory’s idea of positive enjoyment to corresponding accounts in the Platonist tradition, a troubling question emerges: does not the presence of perceptible yearning imply that spiritual pleasure is also tainted by pain? Here, we should contrast Gregory with Plato, who argues that the pleasures of the good life result from imperceptible lacks, and with later Platonists, such as Plotinus and Proclus, who go even further by dismissing *all* lack from their notions of highest pleasures. Unlike Plato, they conceptualise the pinnacle of the contemplative life as an *actualised union* with the supreme being itself, a state in which the soul lacks nothing and which, as Gerd Van Riel notes, “cannot be subject to a process of becoming and movement”.³⁰

26 *Cant X* (GNO VI 313,24–314,7; tr. Norris, 329–331). The same point is made in *Mort* (GNO IX 36,7–10).

27 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 425,14–17; tr. Norris 451, which I have slightly modified to render ἀπόλαυσις as “enjoyment”, rather than “pleasure”).

28 *Cant I* (GNO VI 31,5–8; tr. Norris 33). For parallels in other works, see *Eccl II 8* (GNO V 313,8–314,2; SC 416 180–182) and *Mort* (GNO IX 36,2–7).

29 Smith discusses this in *Passion and Paradise*, 206–216.

30 G. Van Riel, *Pleasure and the Good Life*, Leiden 2000, 115. For the differences between Plato’s

Let us see what Gregory has to say about the presence of lack and pain in the eschatological union. In *Homily 6*, he refers to the a situation in which the soul is “in the One who is the object of desire” and receives “the object of desire within itself”. In other words, it appears to have attained the highest Good. But the union comes with a troubling realisation: the soul now understands that it has not grasped the Good completely and “bewails the fact that she is needy for the Good (ἐνδεής οὖσα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ)”. As one who does not yet have what is present to her desire, she is perplexed and dissatisfied”.³¹ The lack and dissatisfaction felt by the soul could not be more explicitly worded. Gregory even goes so far as to call the soul’s longing for God a “pain” and a “wound”: the arrow of Christ wounds (τέτρωσαι) the heart of the Bride, increasing her yearning (πόθον) by sweet pain (διὰ τῆς γλυκείας ὁδύνης).³² Although Gregory insists that this sweet and joyful pain should not be understood as everyday suffering, it is clear that the connection between desire, lack, and pain persists even in the eschatological fulfilment and accompanies the enjoyment of the soul.³³

The eschatological vision presented in *In Canticum* seems to fly in the face of Gregory’s preoccupation with the unmixed and unified Good. If lack and pain can accompany the enjoyment of divine things, one can ask whether this higher sort of enjoyment is any more pure than sensual pleasure whose mixed nature is a major diminishing factor that disqualifies it as the good. But here we must keep in mind that Gregory applies the criterion of unity chiefly to the Good itself, while the enjoyment derived from the Good is a secondary matter. If pleasure itself were accepted as the good, the presence of pain, its opposite, would be a problem. However, enjoyment is merely a by-product of attaining the divine likeness, which is rooted in the stability of the divine being. Since pleasure is not good and pain is not evil, both of them can continue to exist even at the highest stages of the spiritual life, as long as we accept that the impulses of ἐπιθυμία are never fully eradicated. The Neoplatonists cited by Van Riel would, of course, dismiss Gregory’s solution altogether because the eluding perfection implies that the soul remains in a constant process of becoming, a state they consider alien to the union with the supreme being. But, as many scholars have noted, for Gregory becoming is not antithetical to human perfec-

and Neoplatonists’ notions of higher pleasures, see the whole discussion on Plotinus and Proclus in *ibidem*, 94–133. In my forthcoming PhD thesis I argue that Gregory’s account of spiritual enjoyment in *De anima et resurrectione* comes closer to Plotinus’s and Proclus’s conception of spiritual fulfilment, which builds on Aristotle’s notion of contemplative pleasure.

31 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 179,6–17; tr. Norris 191).

32 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 380,4–6; tr. Norris 401).

33 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 128; tr. Norris 141).

tion but intrinsic of a being that has been created from nothing.³⁴ This coming-to-be characterises its existence even in the eschaton and serves as a vehicle of perfection and perpetual self-transcendence.

While the enjoyment offered by the Good is certainly not unmixed in the Platonic sense, it is nonetheless pure and lasting: it is entirely derived from the Good itself and never withers in satiety due to the infinity and stability of the divine nature. It also lacks the frantic and desperate character of earthly pleasure seeking because the soul can remain confident that what has been attained will not be lost.³⁵ Furthermore, the sweet pain of the eschatological union is not caused by any alteration in the Good itself or the presence of something non-good in the soul. The soul already rests fully in the goodness of God whose being does not allow any presence of evil. Thus, the pain and longing are not caused by a separation from the Good but by the infinity of the Good.

And finally, even if the soul never finds a permanent satisfaction, she does eventually recover from the shocking realisation that her Beloved will remain beyond her grasp. In fact, she will understand that this elusiveness is precisely what grants her the opportunity of everlasting enjoyment:

[T]he veil of her grief (λύπη) is removed when she learns that the true fruition of what she seeks (ἡ ἀληθῆς τοῦ ποθουμένου ἀπόλαυσις) is ever to make progress in seeking and never to halt on the upward path, since her fulfilled desire ever generates a further desire for what is beyond her (τῆς πάντοτε πληρουμένης ἐπιθυμίας ἐτέραν ἐπιθυμίαν τοῦ ὑπερκειμένου γενώσης).³⁶

It is difficult to ascertain whether Gregory above employs the word λύπη in its technical sense, as the passion of pain and the opposite of ἡδονή. If this is the case, he may well allude to a form of enjoyment that is free from all mixture with pain understood as distress of the soul.

4 Conclusions

In this paper, I have offered an analysis of the differences between bodily and spiritual pleasure in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*. After pointing out the

34 See, for example, Smith, *Passion and Paradise*, 219–220.

35 See also *Passion and Paradise*, 221–222, where Smith offers a similar conclusion as to whether the eternally progressing soul suffers a lack.

36 *Cant XII* (GNO VI 369,22–370,3; tr. Norris 389).

rarity of the explicit allusion to spiritual ἡδονή in *Cant* 10, I argued first that Gregory's antipathy towards bodily pleasure stems from the way in which pleasure obscures what is truly good. It tricks people into believing that what is sensually pleasing is also ethically good and worthy of being pursued as the primary goal of human life. However, as a phenomenon of the sensible world, bodily pleasure is always mixed with pain and never offers permanent satisfaction. Spiritual enjoyment, on the other hand, transcends the vicious cycle of desire, pleasure, and satiety, and offers stable and continuous delight. This is made possible by the unified and infinite being of God in which the soul will journey forever.

By offering brief comparisons to other ancient authors, I have showed that the idea that most pleasures are mixed with pain is common in the Platonist tradition and an issue that the more noble pleasures ought to overcome. Plato achieves this by contending that true pleasures result from imperceptible, painless lacks, whereas Plotinus and Proclus relinquish the notion of lack altogether. Gregory, on the other hand, implicitly accepts the continued presence of lack by including desire in the eschatological union and even alludes to the possibility of pain. However, he also makes it clear that this "sweet pain" is different from the distress that accompanies earthly desires and pleasures.

Bibliography

- Coakley, S. "Gregory of Nyssa", in P.L. Gavrilyuk—S. Coakley (eds.), *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, Cambridge 2011, 36–55.
- Harl, M. "Recherches sur l'origénisme d'Origène: la satiété (koros) de la contemplation comme motif de la chute des âmes", *Studia Patristica* 8 (1966) 373–405.
- Helm, J.J. "'Koros': From Satisfaction to Greed", *The Classical World* 87 (1993) 5–11.
- Mann, F. "Zur Wortgruppe μακάρ- in De beatitudinibus, in übrigen Werk Gregors von Nyssa und im Lexicon Gregorianum", in: H.R. Drobner—A. Viciano (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes: An English Version with Commentary and Supporting Studies*, Leiden 2000, 331–358.
- Radde-Gallwitz, A. *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity*, Oxford 2009.
- Silvas, A.M. *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God*, Turnhout 2008.
- Smith, J.W. *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa*, New York 2004, 78–82.
- Toivainen, S. *The Instigator of All Vicious Actions: Pleasure, Sin, and the Good Life in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa*, PhD thesis, University of Durham, 2017, *pro manuscripto*.
- Van Riel, G. *Pleasure and the Good Life*, Leiden 2000.
- Wolfsdorf, D. *Pleasure in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, Cambridge 2013.

Ontology and Existence: *Schésis* of the Soul in Gregory of Nyssa's *In Canticum Canticorum*

Ilaria Vigorelli

1 Introduction: Why Study the Canticum Canticorum through an Analysis of the Occurrences of *Schésis*

An analysis of the occurrences of such a common and frequently used Greek term as *schésis* (σχέσις) takes on a particular character when placed within the context of the history of Trinitarian dogma.

Basil, and subsequently Gregory, begins referencing a reciprocal *schésis* between the Father and the Son in order to indicate what really distinguishes them as one, singular and divine substance. Starting from relative terms, Basil in fact held that the names “Father” and “Son” when “each taken as itself only signifies reciprocal relation”.¹

With a reference to the irreplaceable and conceptually indeterminable *disposition* of the Father toward the Son and the Son toward the Father—which in God coincides with eternal reciprocal *relation* (πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσις)—in the first book of the *Contra Eunomium* Gregory states that reciprocity is a proper characteristic of the divine essence and constitutes a unity of substance because there is infinite exchange.²

To think of the Father-Son relation in the divine essence in this way ensured that the theological conversation began to take into consideration the existence of a divine immanence, something that cannot be grasped in what pertains to its intimate relation if not by way of one's adhesion to Christ, yet it is nameable through the revealed relative names.³ Gregory then explains the

1 ὁ ‘πατήρ’, λέγω, καὶ ὁ ‘υἱός’, ἀλλὰ καθ’ ἑαυτὰ μὲν λεγόμενα, τὴν πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσιν ἐνδείκνυται μόνην (Basil, *Adversus Eunomium* 11,22,47–48). B. Sesboüé—G.M. de Durand—L. Doutreleau (eds.), *Basile de Césarée, Contre Eunome suivi de Eunome Apologie*, Sources chrétiennes 305, Paris 1983, 92.

2 The cited passages can be found in the first book of Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* (*Eun*) 1,159,3–5; *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* (GNO) I 75,3–5 and *Eun* I 236 (GNO I 95,25–96,2). To further deepen these passages, see I. Vigorelli, “Basilio di Cesarea e la sua attenzione alla relazione (σχέσις) nella contesa trinitaria con Eunomio”, *Theologica Xaveriana* 183 (2017) 209–235.

3 Cf. *Eun* I 573 (GNO I 191,21). Also in *Eun* II 373 (GNO I 335,11); *Eun* II 459 (GNO I 360,22) e *Eun* II 559 (GNO I 389,29).

difference between the two distinct natures: between that which is uncreated, whose ontology comes from the human thought which is *in* God through faith;⁴ and that which is created, whose ontology is *from* God.⁵ Thus establishing the difference between the two natures, Gregory was able to develop the analogy between divine, revealed reality and the created, worldly reality wherein the principle that subject to analogy is revealed through its immanent relations. The theological discourse was hereby equipped to assume the task of answering cosmological and anthropological questions starting from Revelation and using what was acquired through a consideration of *schésis* in God, a connection on the whole completely new to philosophical thought.⁶

2 The Various Meanings of Schésis: Semantic and Anthropological Difficulties

While examining the occurrences of *schésis* in the *Canticum*,⁷ what one initially stumbles upon is semantic tension between two meanings: *disposition* or *relation*. This translational difficulty stands in a kind of parallelism with the existential tension between desire and beatitude. Let us here try and map out this tension, both semantic and existential.

1) In the first place, one observes that when Gregory is speaking of desire he emphasizes two particular meanings, either positive or negative depending on the state of beatitude.⁸ These passages reveal the appearances of *schésis* as indicating the disposition of a human being *to be in reference to some other term*. Such a disposition has an ontological value in its openness, its being relative, assuming an existential connotation that changes according to the variation of term *ad quem* chosen by the soul. The *relatable disposition* can in fact become a

4 Gregory calls it *theología* (θεολογία), and it is essentially a “Christological and apophatic” discourse. See G. Maspero, “Theologia”, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 723–727.

5 Gregory calls it *oikonomía* (οἰκονομία). See G. Maspero “Economy”, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 537–543.

6 Giulio Maspero has initiated a line of investigation in this sense within the larger context of studies surrounding Gregory of Nyssa. The first volume in this research is G. Maspero, *Essere e relazione*, Roma 2013.

7 See I. Vigorelli, “Desiderio e beatitudine: schesis nell’*In Canticum Canticorum* di Gregorio di Nissa”, *Annales Theologici* 2 (2014) 277–300.

8 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 198,6 ss.).

passion ignited by things both tangible and material,⁹ the goods of others,¹⁰ or the positions of one's enemies.¹¹ It might also be moved by something immaterial and pure,¹² as in children,¹³ and attach itself to the good.¹⁴ Furthermore, it may, as we shall see, become intimate communion with the Beloved.¹⁵

The term *ad quem* toward which the soul turns its own *disposition to be as being in reference* through a kind of reciprocity configures the value of this disposition. The soul orients itself in relation to reality, configuring itself entirely¹⁶ by way of its own will, which as it is free¹⁷ determines on its own the ordering of disposition, adhering to one good rather than another, to one feeling rather than another.

It thus seems that Gregory may be claiming that the openness of the soul to freely turn toward reality is mankind's *natural disposition*. What, then, is the cause of tension in the sphere of the individual of such a disposition between beatitude and desire? Why might not any disposition freely adopted when faced with reality bear with it a consequence of beatitude?

The disposition toward the good (*schésis pros to agathon*) or to that which is material and tangible (*schésis pros ta phainomena*) does not hold the same ontological value in Gregory, who inherits the anthropological tenets of the Greek metaphysical tradition, but instead introduces free will (*exousia*) in any choice of the good.

The original condition of human nature for Gregory is *from the very beginning* turned toward the good (τῆς πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν σχέσεως),¹⁸ yet this does not indicate a necessary condition. Rather, it signifies a temporal and contingent condition, one that is dynamic and relational. One might say that the openness of created nature is for Gregory mainly the *disposition toward the good*, and on the level of one's own historical existence the created soul can turn itself toward that which is of greater or lesser value, transforming one's disposition toward the good into an attachment to passing things or to that which is incorruptible

9 *Cant I* (GNO VI 22,9–23,1).

10 *Cant II* (GNO VI 64,2–3).

11 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 123,1).

12 *Cant I* (GNO VI 19,10–13).

13 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 198,6 ss.).

14 *Cant II* (GNO VI 56,5–11); *Cant VI* (GNO VI 176,15–177,3); *Cant IX* (GNO VI 277,7–11).

15 *Cant II* (GNO VI 61,3).

16 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 123,1); *Cant IX* (GNO VI 277,11).

17 *Cant II* (GNO VI 55,3–7).

18 Cf. *Cant II* (GNO VI 56,5–11). One finds the same concept, with an analogous formulation, in the *De mortuis*: “indeed all mankind has a natural inclination toward the good” (ἐπειδὴ γὰρ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις φυσικῇ τις πρὸς τὸ καλὸν ἐγκρίται σχέσις). *Mort* (GNO IX 29,9–10).

and eternal. On the level of existence, then, the difference between the configuration of disposition fixed on the immaterial and the good,¹⁹ and that which is fascinated by the attractiveness of material things and tends to become in turn a “materialistic attitude”;²⁰ is due to the intense involvement of the capacity to rationalize, in the *logismos* (see note 13) predisposed to purify thoughts.

Yet rationality in the *In Canticum Canticorum* not only has the role of discerning between what goods to which to be disposed, but this, too, acquires the characteristics of a *disposition toward*. For in the soul this in turn is configured also as response to a nearness, to the call which summons and is issued by Wisdom. The closeness of the Bridegroom, who offers Himself as He is the Logos who addresses the soul in Scripture, is of historical value that configures the disposition (*schésis*) of the soul even on the level of volition. Indeed, Gregory considers this proximity as something prior to any desire for what is divine.

One of the more beautiful examples is in the first homily where Gregory introduces the pedagogical workings of the Word:

In the latter work, she [the Scripture] disparages the human tendency to dwell on the appearances of things (τὴν περὶ τὰ φαινόμενα τῶν ἀνθρώπων σχέσιν) and asserts that everything unstable and passing is vanity (τὸ ἄόρατον), as, for example, in the statement, “All that comes and goes is vanity” (*Ecc* 1:8). Thus she points our soul’s motion of desire (τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἡμῶν κίνησιν) toward the invisible Beauty (τὸ ἄόρατον κάλλος) that is beyond anything grasped by the senses, and having in this way purified the heart of its bent toward appearances (τοῦ δι’ αἰσθήσεως καταλαμβανομένου), she then, in the *Song of Songs*, initiates the mind (μυσταγωγεῖ τὴν διάνοιαν) into the innermost divine sanctuary (ἐντὸς τῶν θείων ἀδύτων). What is described there is an account of a wedding, but what is intellectually discerned is the human soul’s *union* (ἀνάκρασις) with the Divine.²¹

19 *Cant* I (GNO VI 19,10–13).

20 See *Beat* II (GNO VII/2 95,18–20).

21 καὶ διαβαλὼν ἐν τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ τὴν περὶ τὰ φαινόμενα τῶν ἀνθρώπων σχέσιν καὶ μάταιον εἶπὼν εἶναι πᾶν τὸ ἀστατοῦν τε καὶ παρερχόμενον, ἐν οἷς φησιν ὅτι Πᾶν τὸ ἐρχόμενον ματαιότης, ὑπερτίθησι παντός τοῦ δι’ αἰσθήσεως καταλαμβανομένου τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἡμῶν κίνησιν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄόρατον κάλλος καὶ οὕτως ἐκκαθάρας τὴν καρδίαν τῆς περὶ τὰ φαινόμενα σχέσεως τότε διὰ τοῦ Ἀϊσματος τῶν Ἀισμάτων ἐντὸς τῶν θείων ἀδύτων μυσταγωγεῖ τὴν διάνοιαν· ἐν οἷς τὸ μὲν ὑπογραφόμενον ἐπιθαλάμιός τις ἐστὶ διασκευή, τὸ δὲ νοούμενον τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ψυχῆς ἢ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἐστὶν ἀνάκρασις. *Cant* I (GNO VI 22,9–23,1). We translate ἀνάκρασις as union, well aware of the hermeneutical oscillation that the term experienced in the history of Christological dogma. The anachronism of the accusation of Gregory’s terminological and

Here, Gregory uses the term *σχέσις* to indicate the negative disposition of desire. It is placed in contrast with the condition of the heart that renders one able to know the mystery of God. A pure heart is free of the attraction to tangible things, and such a condition is necessary if the mind is to be introduced into the divine intimacy (ἐν τὸς τῶν θείων ἀδύτων μυσταγωγεῖ τὴν διάνοιαν). Thus the doctrine of knowledge that Gregory draws from the sacred text emerges—if a man's heart is turned toward material things his mind cannot access the mystery of God. Heart and mind are intrinsically co-related in any knowledge of God, but with this comes a relationship between the relation that man has with passing things and his interior disposition. In this sense, knowledge of God is tied to singular incidents of the soul, to its individual choices. One might even say to its relations and its culture. The *σχέσις* in light of the things that will someday no longer be facilitates or impedes knowledge of the divine inasmuch as it changes the perception of the intensity of one's own desire, which becomes fullness only when a man's interior is no longer fixed on the material but can be led into innermost sanctuary of the divine.²²

The intensity of rationalizing is hence rooted in history and unlike classical philosophy is not merely an undertaking of purifying thought (which gushes out of control). Rather, for Gregory it has to do with a realm in which *the soul opens itself to the presence*, it makes itself ready and responds to the closeness of the Bridegroom.²³

The natural condition of *schésis* as disposition toward, the origin of any openness to the good or tragic attachment to temporal things, is thus also a way to arrive at union with the incarnate God, a union lived according to reason and something to be found in its actual existence within some history. In this sense we can understand that the *schésis* of the soul can become actual *relation* with the Beloved, precisely thank to its openness to being as being in relation to some other.

doctrinal imprecision has already been demonstrated in Maspero, "La cristología de Gregorio de Nisa desde la perspectiva del II Concilio de Constantinopla," *Scripta Theologica* 36 (2004/2) 385–410.

22 It therefore seems there is an interesting parallelism which merits a certain elaboration, one between the most interior place within man, indicated by his heart (*καρδίαν*), and that which is most internal to the divine, indicated by the term *ἀδύτων*. See. L.F. Mateo-Seco, "Adyton", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 6–8; Cf. also J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1944, 182–189; F. Mann, *Lexicon Gregorianum*, Vol. 1, Leiden-Boston 1999, 77–78.

23 See *Cant IX* (GNO VI 276,13).

Man does not cease to be “on the borderline (*methórios* μεθόριος) between two natures—of which one is incorporeal and thus intellectual and pure, and the other corporeal nature is murky and irrational”.²⁴ For this reason his *schésis* oscillates for the duration of his life between conformity to this original openness to the good and choosing the good, and he on his own maintains an active tension between his nature and his history.

An analysis of the appearances of *schesis* thus allows one to distinguish the role of the will which for Gregory is the source of all choice and also response to a desire for the good ignited by the good perceived to be near. In this context, thought (*dianoia*) and the faculty of rationalizing (*logismos*) is understood as capacity to discern between reality and different goods with respect to beatitude.

Up until now the first characterization of *schésis* is a kind of generic representation as disposition *rooted in tendency*:

- a) man naturally *orients himself toward/is disposed to*;
- b) is naturally turned toward the good;
- c) in the sphere of existence, thought discerns between goods and free will determines the orientation of the disposition. One finds along this line of reasoning that thought itself becomes a way of aperture to divine knowledge when it embraces this nearness of the Incarnate *Logos*.

Describing human *schésis*, the exegetical text thus describes not only an openness of the soul—a naturally open and changeable configuration, a *physis* which does not end in itself, a generic desire for the good—but also a disposition that when purified by the Word is rendered capable of recognizing God, the Bridegroom, who draws near to the soul.

2) There is, then, a second meaning given to *schésis*, as *relation* with the Bridegroom. On this point I would like to emphasize the dimension of the closeness of the Bridegroom and the intimacy of communion of the Bride. That is, the two terms of the possibility of knowledge of God and the word it expresses.

When Gregory indicates in his second homily that the aim of the *Song of Songs* is to “teach us in depth philosophy and knowledge of God”,²⁵ composes an analogy between the outward description of the dressings on the Ark of the Covenant²⁶ and the attitude of the beloved toward her husband as described in the *Song of Songs*. These in turn become an obscure narration (δι’ αἰνιγμάτων)²⁷

²⁴ Cant XI (GNO VI 333,13).

²⁵ εἰς πᾶσαν φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ θεογνωσίας ὑφήγησιν. Cant II (GNO VI 44,9–10).

²⁶ Described in Ex 26.

²⁷ Cant II (GNO VI 45,3).

of the realities that are actually represented, invisible (ἀθέατοι)²⁸ to he who has not yet washed clean the fabric of his conscience (τὸ τῆς συνειδήσεως ἑαυτοῦ ἱμάτιον)²⁹ in the law of Moses.

The real content of the narration of the *Song of Songs* is, then, knowledge of God (θεογνωσία), and to obtain as much what is needed is to know to interpret the bearings of the beloved toward her husband (τὴν πρὸς τὸ ποθοῦμενον σχέσιν).

This book is the true tent (σκηνή) of witness. Its external veils and curtains and the drapes that cover it round are a set of erotic words and expressions (ἔρωτικοί λόγοι) that evince an orientation to an object of desire (τὴν πρὸς τὸ ποθοῦμενον σχέσιν), offer a description of something beautiful, and make mention of bodily members, both those that are seen and those that are concealed by clothing.³⁰

The meaning of *schésis* extends to the behavior and manner that express desire of the Bride for her Bridegroom. Yet, as the bearings of the beloved are understood through the love that sustains her, so, too, the words of Scripture communicate the correct vision of things (θεωρία) only to the one who approaches as one purified by love.³¹ The *schésis* of the soul is therefore also *interior attitude*, love for the Bridegroom, and it is just such an attitude that stands to the discourse—as to the Logos—as the covering and dressings with respect to the Ark of the Covenant. The word that might call the Bridegroom, the word which speaks God though cannot say anything of essence, is precisely an interior attitude of love, both received and exchanged.

The text wherein the coupled terminology ἐνδιάθετον σχέσιν appears is in the second homily. The context presents the Bride as knowledgeable of the fragility of her own capacity to stand watch over the good that she in love receives out of love from the Bridegroom,³² and yet certain of the name by which she might

28 *Cant* II (GNO VI 45,5).

29 *Cant* II (GNO VI 45,13).

30 αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀληθινή τοῦ μαρτυρίου σκηνή, ἥς προκαλύμματα μὲν καὶ δέρρεις καὶ ἡ τῆς αὐλαίας περιβολὴ ἐρωτικοὶ τινες γίνονται λόγοι καὶ ῥήματα τὴν πρὸς τὸ ποθοῦμενον σχέσιν ἐμφαίνοντα καὶ κάλλους ὑπογραφὴ καὶ μνήμη σωματικῶν μελῶν, τῶν τε προφανομένων ἐν τῷ προσώπῳ καὶ τῶν ὑποκεκρυμμένων τῇ τῆς ἐσθῆτος περιβολῇ. *Cant* II (GNO VI 44,10–16).

31 The source of knowledge of God is Scripture, yet here Gregory offers hermeneutic criteria for the interpretation of Biblical texts: the law of the spirit (ὁ τοῦ πνεύματος νόμος, *Cant* II [GNO VI 45,12]) does not permit contact with dead thoughts (ὁ νεκρᾶς τινος καὶ βδελυκτῆς ἐννοίας, *Cant* II [GNO VI 45,14–15]). Here dead thoughts seem to be those spoken by the letter, taken up without cultivating relation with the Spouse: they are concepts taken as themselves without establishing in one's reading the living relation with the Living.

32 *Cant* II (GNO VI 60,21).

invoke him. Such a name as his is intimate relation with He who renews her. Relation, the disposition toward him as reciprocity, gives her the possibility of finding Him again, calling upon Him:³³

On this account she leaves off addressing the maidens and calls once more in prayer upon the Bridegroom, putting to the One she desires the name (ὄνομα ποιησαμένη τοῦ ποθομένου) of the way she feels about him (τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐνδιάθετον σχέσιν).³⁴

The name corresponds to the choice that the Bride makes for the good she receives, and thereby configures the disposition of a bride. The reciprocity among the bride and Bridegroom ensures that the name might come from what exists, from the existence of their very same relation: as beloved.

A bit farther along, Gregory has recourse to σχέσις once more in making explicit the two-fold value—attribution of name but together also with apophatic knowledge—enclosed within the relation of love:

Speak to me, you whom my soul loves for so shall I name you, since your name is above every name and cannot be spoken (ἄφραστόν) or grasped by any rational nature (ἀχώρητον). Therefore your name, which declares your goodness, is my soul's attitude toward you (ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς μου περὶ σὲ σχέσις).³⁵

Gregory maintains that knowledge of God is given to the soul in its interior disposition and that even though the divine nature may remain unknowable, the relation of the soul with the Husband bestows upon the unknowable nature a name.³⁶

33 These same references to the invocation allow for the emergence of the liturgical-sacramental sense that provides the background for any reading of the *Song of Songs* as proposed by Gregory. Cf. A. Cortesi, *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa. Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale*, Roma 2000, 34–39.

34 Διὰ τοῦτο καταλιποῦσα τὸν πρὸς τὰς νεάνιδας λόγον πάλιν δι' εὐχῆς ἀνακαλεῖ τὸν νυμφίον ὄνομα ποιησαμένη τοῦ ποθομένου τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐνδιάθετον σχέσιν. *Cant II* (GNO VI 61,1–3). If what I'm arguing is correct, the english translation of τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐνδιάθετον σχέσιν would be "the intimate relation with him".

35 ἀπάγγελίον μοι, ὃν ἡγάπησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου. οὕτω γὰρ σε κατονομάζω, ἐπειδὴ τὸ ὄνομά σου ὑπὲρ πᾶν ἔστιν ὄνομα καὶ πάση φύσει λογικῇ ἄφραστόν τε καὶ ἀχώρητον. οὐκοῦν ὄνομά σοί ἐστι γνωριστικὸν τῆς σῆς ἀγαθότητος ἢ τῆς ψυχῆς μου περὶ σὲ σχέσις. *Cant II* (GNO VI 61,13–17).

36 "Beloved" speaks of relation, though does not say anything of relation, which of itself remains beyond the apophatic veil. See also *Beat I* (GNO VII/2 80,17–20).

Here one sees a parallel to Trinitarian *schésis*, although according to an already overthrown ontological ordering. While the existence of the reciprocity of relation in the divine immanence has been made known through the revelation of the relative names (Father, Son), in the history of the union of the soul with Christ, the *name* for God is the existing reciprocity of being in a mutual relationship (bride-Bridegroom, beloved-Beloved).

3 Ontology and Existence

The analogy between the two orders of existence—that of the being of God and the being of mankind, that of relation between the Father and the Son and that of relation between the Son and mankind—appears in the final occurrence of *schésis* present in the *Canticum*, where Gregory of Nyssa refers to *schésis* configured for the good, the fullness of which is prepared for by the Father and in the Father.

This explains why we have learned that with the Father there are “many places to stay” (Jn 14.2), corresponding to the degree of each individual’s inclination to the good (πρὸς τὸ καλὸν σχέσεως) and withdrawal from the worse, since there is a reward prepared for all of them.³⁷

Reference to beatitude with the Father allows for a delineation of a few summarized reflections:

- For the most part, what Gregory means by the term *σχέσις* is the disposition of the soul. It is the changeable but original openness of mankind to the good (on the level of created nature).
- In line with the freedom to choose (προαίρεσις), the *σχέσις* of the soul actually *configures* itself with respect to the original good that turns it toward what is divine and eternal. Choosing the good or choosing what is bad—thereby contributing form to *schésis* in mankind—has an immanent effect that involves all the faculties of the soul (on the level of historical existence).
- The various dispositions a soul might take on—toward the good or toward temporal, material and corruptible things—do not all possess the same anthropological value in that the condition of the human φύσις in the beginning was meant to be oriented toward the good (on the level of created nature).

37 τούτου χάριν πολλάς εἶναι παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ μονὰς μεμαθήκαμεν κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς ἐν ἐκάστῳ πρὸς τὸ καλὸν σχέσεως καὶ τῆς τοῦ χείρονος ἀποστάσεως, ἐτοιμαζομένης πᾶσι τῆς ἀντιδόσεως. *Cant* XV (GNO VI 459,4–7).

- The final retribution for the soul corresponds with the *σχέσις* toward the good, willingly fostered. Of itself the reward is relation with Christ, the union of the Bride and her Bridegroom as orientation toward the good, or virtue, means to be configured according to His will, to possess love itself within oneself (on the level of historical existence).

The value of *schésis* thus oscillates between two meanings and on two different ontological planes, that of nature (*physis*) and that of the existent subject (history):

- 1) The *schésis* of the soul is *disposition*, the openness to alterity or otherness, or the “attractability” of mankind. Here one is dealing with the realm of *nature* that is derived from the Trinitarian *schésis* as the analogical structure of being in the image and likeness of God—that is, analogous to the Son inasmuch as He is relative to the Father. Hence it is already in and of itself relational, but it is such as *created nature*.
- 2) *Schésis* in the soul is in act *relational*, as love. Here one is operating on the level of the existing subject, where it is revealed that the nearness of the incarnate *Logos* (Bridegroom) addresses mankind in the love that flows from the Father and the Son and renders the soul that surrenders itself to it capable of in turn emanating love for Him. This is the plane of relational freedom lived out as *reciprocity*.

With respect to classical Greek ontology, the thought of Gregory of Nyssa is more rich in that on account of the Incarnation of the Word it places knowledge of God in the reciprocal relation of love with Him. Yet all the while he is safe from any accusation of logocentrism in that he leaves the knowledge (the name) of God in the dimension of relation, that is in the concrete reciprocity that is unrepeatable and not to be generalized or made tangible, rather always sacramental and possessing the quality of mystery.³⁸

4 Conclusion

The description of *schésis* in the soul in Gregory of Nyssa's homiletic commentary on the *Song of Songs* reflects a discussion of particular anthropological value when confronted with intra-Trinitarian *schésis*.³⁹ Indeed, in the divine

38 Scot Douglass has beautifully explicated Cappadocian apophaticism facing Derrida's critique to logocentrism and the christian negative theology. See S. Douglass, *Theology of the Gap. Cappadocian Language Theory and the Trinitarian Controversy*, New York 2005, 263–276.

39 See *Eun* I 159 (GNO I 75,3–5) and *Eun* I 236 (GNO I 95,25–96,2).

ontology in light of his claim of the reciprocal *schésis* of the Father and the Son, Gregory (in the wake of Basil) identifies a relational immanence, both eternal and infinite, in the divine nature. In elaborating on the revealed names, Gregory of Nyssa stands at the forefront of a revisitation of the philosophical category of relation (*schésis*). Enlightened by the revelation that the Son *is in* the Father, *relation* can in fact distinguish without excluding one from the other and offer a configuration without issuing uniformity among the two.

If before Gregory being image of God (Logos/image/Son) was interpreted by theological thought as an intermediary and necessary ontological level between God and the world, his ontology of reciprocal relation and love—in uncreated nature—permits one to not be compelled to philosophically link the Son to ontological necessity. A philosophical instrument is hereby provided which recognizes the distinction of the theology of the Logos.

In the *Canticum Canticorum*, one meets an impressive display of the reflection of *schésis* in created nature. Undertaking an analysis of the appearances of *schésis* facilitates the notion that the *disposition* of the soul—characteristic of *physis*—is distinct from any individual and unrepeatable *relation* that an existing soul establishes with God through its choice to accept the gift of the Beloved. The union of the Bride and Bridegroom and, therefore, the union of the soul with the Incarnate God—who is near to her—is not for this something ascribable to the nature of the soul, rather to its history which is unrepeatable and singular. Such is the immanent *schésis*, both in the ordering of the Incarnation as well in that of the love between the spouses or the mystical-sacramental union of the soul with God.

In this way, the polar tensions between nature and grace, nature and history, immanence and transcendence, are accounted for in Gregory's theology by relation as existing condition, a reality distinct and overflowing with respect to the disposition of the soul. This overflow of Trinitarian ontology revealed by the names is thereby reflected as an overflow of relation existing in history, which will in turn become a name for God.

Bibliography

- Cortesi, A. *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa. Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale*, Roma 2000.
- Daniélou, J. *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris 1944.
- Douglass, S. *Theology of the Gap. Cappadocian Language Theory and the Trinitarian Controversy*, New York 2005.

- Mann, F. *Lexicon Gregorianum*, Vol. 1, Leiden-Boston 1999.
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. “*Adyton*”, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leuven 2009, 6–8.
- Maspero, G. “Theologia”, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 723–727.
- Maspero, G. “Economy”, in L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 537–543.
- Maspero, G. *Essere e relazione*, Roma 2013.
- Maspero, G. “La cristología de Gregorio de Nisa desde la perspectiva del 11 Concilio de Constantinopla,” *Scripta Theologica* 36 (2004/2) 385–410.
- Sesboüé, B.—G.M. de Durand—L. Doutreleau (eds.). *Basile de Césarée, Contre Eunome suivi de Eunome Apologie*, Sources chrétiennes 305, Paris 1983.
- Vigorelli, I. “Desiderio e beatitudine: schesis nell’In Canticum canticorum di Gregorio di Nissa”, *Annales Theologici* 2 (2014) 277–300.
- Vigorelli, I. “Basilio di Cesarea e la sua attenzione alla relazione (σχέσις) nella contesa trinitaria con Eunomio”, *Theologica Xaveriana* 183 (2017) 209–235.

Pursuing God: the Role of Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the Song of Songs*

Martin C. Wenzel

Gregory's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* are mostly read as mystical literature, focusing on the ascent of the individual soul and on the life to come. This ascent is often understood as spiritual, with the physical dimension rather neglected. As a consequence, a possible ethical orientation of the *Homilies* is either missed or even denied, with the ethical and mystical approach understood as antagonistic.¹

Considering, however, the original homiletic character and setting of this work, which was addressed to ordinary Christians,² and considering that Gregory himself calls his opus a "guidance (χειραγωγή) for the "more fleshly folk (σαρκωδέστεροι),"³ the question arises whether these homilies provide something helpful for the audience regarding ethical behaviour. Could it be after all that the relation between ethical and mystical orientation is not as antagonistic as often assumed? In the following this very relationship will be examined by means of Gregory's concept of virtue in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*.

1 See e.g. Jean Daniélou's notion: "On imagine difficilement que ces Homélies d'inspiration mystique aient été données à Nysse. Les sermons donnés par Grégoire dans sa ville épiscopale ont un tout autre ton. Ils concernent avant tout des problèmes moraux" (J. Daniélou, "Chronologie des œuvres de Grégoire de Nysse", in: F.L. Cross (ed.), *Papers presented to the Fourth International Conference on Patristic Studies in Oxford 1963*, StPatr VII, Berlin 1966, 159–169, 168). Referring to this, Cahill states: "Quite the contrary: the main theme of Gregory's *Commentary on the Song of Songs* is what conduces to the life of virtue" (J.B. Cahill, "The Date and Setting of Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*", *JThS* 32 [1981] 447–460, 452). This objection, however, has found little echo.

2 This applies both to the addressees listening to the oral form delivered during regular services in Nyssa and to those reading the written form sent to Olympias in Konstantinopol, cf. R.A. Norris, *Introduction to Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012, XXI f.; I.M. Shea, *The Church according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa's Homilies on the Canticle of Canticles*, Baltimore 1968, 28. For further questions concerning the genre, the setting and composition and the addressees of this work, see the instructive analysis of F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993, 7–35; cf. Cahill, "The Date and Setting of Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*", 447–460.

3 *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 4,7; tr. Norris 13).

1 Pursuit

In the wake of Origen, Gregory understands the *Song of Songs* together with the other Solomonic literature *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* as corresponding with the development and life of human beings. For Gregory, however, all three biblical books aim at bringing “the human person to the life of virtue”, the *Song of Songs* exceeding the other two books.⁴

Based on this understanding that “virtue is the deeper meaning to which the words of the *Song* refer”,⁵ Gregory comments on the text by making use of “figural interpretation (διὰ τροπικῆς θεωρίας).”⁶ For him the designation of the method of interpretation does not matter, “as long as a firm grasp is kept on thoughts that edify.”⁷ The benefit for the hearer thus constitutes the hermeneutical criterion of Gregory’s exegesis.⁸ These profitable ideas are in turn strictly orientated towards the aim of the “guidance (δδηγία) in virtue”.⁹ He sets his method of exegesis as follows:

one ought not in every instance to remain with the letter (since the obvious sense of the words often does us harm when it comes to the virtuous life), but one ought to shift to an understanding that concerns the immaterial and intelligible, so that corporeal ideas may be transposed into intellect and thought when the fleshly sense of the words has been shaken off like dust.¹⁰

Following Gregory, it takes a spiritual consideration of the *Song of Songs* to achieve the goal of virtuous life.

4 *Cant* I (GNO VI 17,12–18,10); cf. in contrast Origen’s interpretation in *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, *Preface* 3, 6–7.

5 H. Boersma, “Saving Bodies: Anagogical Transposition in St. Gregory of Nyssa’s *Commentary on the Song of Songs*”, *Ex Auditu* 26 (2010) 168–200, 186.

6 *Cant* IX (GNO VI 274,16; tr. Norris 289); for an overview concerning virtue, see L.F. Mateo-Seco, “Virtue: ἀρετή”, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 784–787.

7 *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 5,8f.; tr. Norris 5).

8 F. Dünzl, *Gregor von Nyssa. In Canticum Canticorum Homiliae. Homilien zum Hohenlied*, Freiburg 1994, 99 note 7, with reference to G.-I. Gargano, *La teoria di Gregorio di Nissa sul Cantico dei Cantici. Indagine su alcune indicazioni di metodo esegetico*, Rome 1981, 163.

9 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 125,15–17; tr. Norris 139); concerning the goal of virtuous life, see *inter alia* *Cant* IV (GNO VI 131,10).

10 *Cant* prol. (GNO VI 6,14–17,1; tr. Norris 5).

Gregory generally considers virtue as the fundamental faculty of educated and reflected people.¹¹ As a precondition it requires reason to realize virtue through the mastering of body and soul.¹² This mastery is reflected in the definition of virtue which Gregory sees in Aristotelian tradition as “the mean between each of the extremes”, regarding the lack of good and its exaggeration.¹³

But what is the adequate motivation for virtuous actions? Gregory understands virtue as “masterless”, “voluntary” and “unconstrained”.¹⁴ In the *Canticum-Homilies* he emphasizes that the motivation to ethical behaviour lacks extrinsical attraction, but is rather born intrinsically through inherent desire (ἐπιθυμία).¹⁵ With the emergence of this motivational desire, self-knowledge and knowledge of God are intertwined: In understanding and thus purifying itself, the soul—more precisely its governing part (ἡγεμονικόν)—is encouraged by the Logos, who friendly accepts the soul's present state, praises her achievements, and creates thereby “a more vehement desire for better things”.¹⁶

Based on its motivation and orientation, Gregory's idea of virtue “is decidedly marked by its indissoluble relation to growth without limits, to ἐπέκτασις”.¹⁷ Gregory illustrates this spatially by attesting that virtue's “natural growth is upwards (ἀνωφύης), and it looks toward what is above”.¹⁸ Thus Christian life appears as a “virtue's race”,¹⁹ stretching out toward what lies ahead and striving for the goal of “the fullness of virtue”.²⁰

11 *Cant* IX (GNO VI 287,6–8; tr. Norris 303).

12 *Cant* X (GNO VI 298,16–19; tr. Norris 315); cf. M. Laird, “Under Solomon's Tutelage: The Education of Desire in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*”, *Modern Theology* 18 (2002) 507–525, 508: “But if reason governs the movements of the soul, what might otherwise be perverted into passion becomes virtue”.

13 *Cant* IX (GNO VI 284,4–16; tr. Norris 299); cf. *Vit Moys* 11, 288 (GNO VII/1 284); Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2.6 (1106a).

14 *Cant* V (GNO VI 160,17–161,1; tr. Norris 173); here as well Aristotle's doctrine of virtue is clearly mirrored (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 3.1–8 [1109b–1114b]; cf. *Cant* XII [GNO VI 353,2]).

15 *Cant* V (GNO VI 160,12–15; tr. Norris 173).

16 *Cant* III (GNO VI 72,8–73,1; tr. Norris 81).

17 L.F. Mateo-Seco, “Virtue: ἀρετή”, 786.

18 *Cant* IV (GNO VI 125,10 f.; tr. Norris 139); cf. *Cant* XI (GNO VI 334,1 f.); *Cant* V (GNO VI 158,19–21).

19 *Cant* XIV (GNO VI 417,6; tr. Norris 443); cf. *Cant* V (GNO VI 149,6).

20 *Cant* I (GNO VI 39,15–40,1; tr. Norris 43).

2 Knowledge

Gregory enfoldes the theological reason for the importance of virtue in his interpretation of the *Song of Songs* in *Homily 3*, which he values higher than the previous homilies. For he sees the underlying biblical text of the first two homilies as “preface”, since the divine Logos starts speaking with his own voice in the text he comments on in *Homily 3*.²¹

Beginning with the Song’s notion of God as “unapproachable, impalpable, and incomprehensible”, Gregory turns to the virtues:

Hence we judge that the words of the text are teaching us this, namely, that that Reality, whatever it is in its essence, which transcends the entire structure and order of Being, is unapproachable, impalpable, and incomprehensible but that, for us, the sweetness that is blended within us by the purity of the virtues takes its place.²²

Gregory here depicts the role of virtues in using scent metaphors: Through the purity of the virtues God’s fragrance gets distilled so that one can smell the unknowable and untouchable God, who thereby becomes a blend with human beings.

But Gregory goes further and sees virtue not only as a divine attribute, but even identifies God and virtue: “for in a certain way, both are one—possession of perfect virtue and possession of the Godhead—since there is no virtue outside the Godhead”.²³ The goal and way of gaining knowledge correlate strongly with each other, in as much as growing in virtue means growing in God.²⁴

Based on this theological understanding of virtue and its function as a mode of participating in God, virtue plays a crucial role in the knowledge of God: “that knowledge of the Good that transcends every intellect comes to us through the

21 *Cant III* (GNO VI 70,14–71,8; tr. Norris 79).

22 *Cant III* (GNO VI 89,15–20; tr. Norris 99); cf. in contrast Origen, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 2.9; see also E. Reyes Gacitúa, “El perfume del Esposo: Según Gregorio de Nisa en el Comentario al Cantar de los Cantares”, *Teología y Vida* XLVIII (2007) 207–214.

23 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 285,16 f.; tr. Norris, 301); cf. *Cant III* (GNO VI 90,2; tr. Norris 101): God as “the true virtue” (τὴν ἀληθινὴν ἀρετὴν); *Cant I* (GNO VI 36,5; tr. Norris 39): God as “the absolute virtue” (τῆς παντελοῦς ἀρετῆς); see also *Vit Moys I* (GNO VII/1 4,11 f.; 118,20). For the historical background of the identification of God and virtue, cf. S. Leuenberger-Wenger, *Ethik und christliche Identität bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 2008, 184.

24 *Cant III* (GNO VI 98,6–12; tr. Norris 109).

virtues".²⁵ In the *Canticum-Homilies*, Gregory stresses that knowledge of God has an essential practical dimension. Following Gregory, knowing God requires ethical behaviour so that the beams of the one and truly godly virtue can shine in our life, making "the Invisible visible for us and the Incomprehensible comprehensible".²⁶ It stems from this theological nature of virtue that practice of virtue and knowledge of God are "strictly correlative".²⁷ This close relationship is also evident in Gregory's usage of the image of the "lilies", for he interprets them as both, knowledge and virtue.²⁸

The practical dimension of knowledge can be seen in the figure of the bride throughout the *Canticum-Homilies*: She accomplishes her progression through "active knowledge (διὰ τῆς ἐνεργουῦς γνώσεως)", to which she is encouraged by the Logos.²⁹ With her example Gregory illustrates the reciprocity between human's and God's behaviour.

On the one hand virtue appears as an indispensable condition for the indwelling of Christ, for "the Bridegroom does not lodge in a soul that lacks the virtues".³⁰ For Gregory, Christ reveals himself to human being "in a way that accords with the capacity of the one into whom he comes".³¹ Gregory underlines human activity and choice even more: "God is always for us what by our own choice (προαίρεσις) we show ourselves to be for God".³²

25 Cant III (GNO VI 90,18–91,4; tr. Norris 101); cf. N. Crawford, "Bridging the Gap: Understanding Knowledge of God in Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*", *The Asbury Journal* 65 (2010) 55–67, 65: "The reality is that participation does not give knowledge, but that living a virtuous life does. Thus, it becomes imperative for Gregory to live the virtuous life".

26 Cant III (GNO VI 90,12–91,4; tr. Norris 101).

27 R.A. Norris, "The Soul takes Flight: Gregory of Nyssa and the *Song of Songs*", *ATR* 80 (1998) 517–532, 528. So in Gregory we cannot speak of a subordination of virtue to knowledge as it is the case in platonic tradition; more adequately put they are on an equal level, in a reciprocal relationship, cf. M. Laird, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Mysticism of Darkness: A Reconsideration", *The Journal of Religion* 79 (1999) 592–616, 614. Regarding the strong focus on virtue in Gregory's thought a stoic influence is assumed by E.G. Konstantinou, *Die Tugendlehre Gregors von Nyssa im Verhältnis zu der antik-philosophischen und jüdisch-christlichen Tradition*, Würzburg 1966, 119 f.

28 Cant XV (GNO VI 438,10–11; tr. Norris 465 f.; 441,20–442,2; tr. Norris 469); cf. Laird, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Mysticism of Darkness: A Reconsideration", 615.

29 Cant VIII (GNO VI 249,16–18; tr. Norris 263).

30 Cant XV (GNO VI 437,12 f.; tr. Norris 465).

31 Cant III (GNO VI 96,7–13; tr. Norris 107); cf. Cant VII (GNO VI 206,12–14).

32 Cant IX (GNO VI 264,16–265,1; tr. Norris 281).

Whereas on the other hand it is God who plants the virtues³³ and prepares himself a place in human beings through the virtues;³⁴ it is God's love that a virtuous person contains, rendering in turn the person's love effective.³⁵ It seems that in this very relationship between virtue and knowledge of God the categories of activity and passivity become blurred.

3 Neighbourship

Based on Gregory's theological concept of virtue, every virtuous behaviour therefore can be understood as an expression and a testimony of one's relationship to God. It is through the virtues that the intelligible is made visible, and the soul becomes a "supremely vivid image (ἐναργεστάτην εἰκόνα) of the prototypical Beauty".³⁶ But, as Gregory underlines, both soul and body are affected by virtue.³⁷ Therefore, the realization of the virtues involves not only the soul but also the body:

So I think we are taught by these words that it is not only within the soul—invisibly—in the form of an abiding disposition that the virtues are established. We are also taught that the virtues are not averse to the visible manifestation of their loveliness.³⁸

For having virtue is of course nothing solely interior, it expresses itself. In regard to the visibleness of virtue Gregory differentiates this expression in two dimensions: It is essential to "manifest oneself" and to reveal the inner and hidden mind-set before God. Also it is necessary to show one's inner disposition outwardly towards other fellow humans. This happens in part for pedagogical reason.³⁹ But besides this pedagogical aspect, leading a virtuous life implicates the loving focus on fellow humans, which re-effects one's relationship to God. For Gregory it is through the love of neighbour that one becomes truly God's neighbour:

33 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 277,7 f.; tr. Norris 291 f.).

34 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 438,4–12; tr. Norris 465).

35 *Cant VII* (GNO VI 206,12–207,7; tr. Norris 219).

36 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 439,3–11; tr. Norris 467).

37 Cf. *Cant VII* (GNO VI 230,17; 241,8); *Cant XV* (GNO VI 454,9). See also *Vit Moys I* (GNO VII/1 88,5–10; 99,13; 102,7).

38 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 112,8–12; tr. Norris 125).

39 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 112,12–16; tr. Norris 125); cf. *Cant VII* (GNO VI 219,12–14).

For she who imitates the loving will of the Master [...] truly becomes close to the goodness of her Lord because she has drawn near to God by love of neighbor. Therefore the Word says to her, “You are beautiful now that by your good choice you have drawn close to Beauty”.⁴⁰

This idea of neighbourship is rooted not least in the Incarnation—the parable of the good Samaritan in *Homily* 14, where Gregory depicts Christ as the merciful neighbour of human beings, can be seen as the locus classicus in this respect.⁴¹ It is only because of God’s descent to the lowly in the Incarnation that God is accessible to the soul, lifts her up and guides her on her way.⁴² Following Gregory, it is the twofold law of love which “renders the entire perfection of the virtuous life something brief and easily itemized”.⁴³ Herein the “christocentric dimension of ἀρετή”⁴⁴ can be seen clearly.

4 Communion

For Gregory, the realization of the different virtues differs from person to person, according to each one’s power and choice.⁴⁵ The progress in virtue as well is shaped differently depending on the respective life.⁴⁶ Therefore, the virtuous manner of life “is not uniform (οὐ μονοειδής) or marked by a single style (οὐδὲ μονότροπος)”.⁴⁷ The action of the virtues rather takes place “in a variety of forms (πολυειδώς)”.⁴⁸

Aside from this accent on virtuous individuality, following Gregory virtuous behaviour leads to communion. He emphasizes the essential social dimension of the pursuit of God in his interpretation of the relationship between the bride and the young women, but particularly in the way he describes the church.⁴⁹

40 *Cant VII* (GNO VI 215,8–16; tr. Norris 227).

41 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 427,21–428,10; tr. Norris 453).

42 *Cant X* (GNO VI 304,16–305,2; tr. Norris 321).

43 *Cant XIV* (GNO VI 418,4–6; tr. Norris 443); cf. *Cant IV* (GNO VI 121,16–122,11). See also F. Dünzl, “Die Canticum-Exegese des Gregor von Nyssa und des Origenes im Vergleich”, *JbAC* 36 (1993) 94–109, 103.

44 L.F. Mateo-Seco, “Virtue: ἀρετή”, 784.

45 *Cant I* (GNO VI 35,16–36,4; tr. Norris 39).

46 *Cant VI* (GNO VI 186,6–12; tr. Norris 199).

47 *Cant IX* (GNO VI 271,16–22; tr. Norris 287).

48 *Cant IV* (GNO VI 123,17–19; tr. Norris 137).

49 Cf. Maspero, “Cant”, in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 121–125, 122: “Starting with the seventh homily, Gregory develops the Christological and Ecclesiological interpretations in parallel, interpreting the figure of the bride as

Comparing the one body of the church with the individual soul, Gregory highlights the connection between contemplation (θεωρία) and action (πράξις) and their mutual relationship: “for contemplation does not of itself bring the soul to perfection unless it makes room for works that further the practice of the moral life”.⁵⁰ This accounts for the church as well as for the individual person: It takes contemplation and action, soul and body, to follow the road to perfection.⁵¹

Looking at the church as one body, Gregory emphasizes the aforementioned communal dimension which he ties to christological notions. In his view, Christ assigns every virtue to the church and forms the church to one body. Gregory even states that “anyone, therefore, who focuses attention on the church is in fact looking at Christ”.⁵² Hence, as the church mirrors the plenitude of virtue, each one has a special function for the body of Christ.⁵³ But it is not the position or function of a single person which matter in the church but the individual’s growth in love and progress in virtue.⁵⁴ Gregory emphasizes this with regard to ascetics, who realize virtue together, and who he therefore refers to as “the ornament of the church”.⁵⁵

This social dimension of virtue finds its concentrated expression in the Eucharist, in which God encourages those to drink the wine, “who have drawn near to him in virtue”.⁵⁶ Besides serving as origin, way and aim at once for the pursuit of the divine, virtue builds the constituent momentum of the community gathered at the table. This shows that the ascent to God is not pictured as individualistic, but as being accomplished in fellowship. So too at the end of the homilies,⁵⁷ following a salvation-historical dynamic, the eschatological vision of all being one emphasizes the universal perspective and makes unambiguously clear that individual perfection only takes place in communion.

both the soul and the Church. Later, he widens the consideration to include the cosmological dimension of salvation”.

50 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 393,21–394,6; tr. Norris 415).

51 Cf. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 376 regarding the connection between faith and love in the church.

52 *Cant XIII* (GNO VI 383,3–6; tr. Norris 403).

53 *Cant VII* (GNO VI 230,5–8; tr. Norris 241).

54 Cf. Shea, *The Church according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa's Homilies on the Canticle of Canticles*, 190; Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam*, 243.

55 *Cant VII* (GNO VI 222,18–219,2; tr. Norris 235).

56 *Cant X* (GNO VI 310,18–311,2; tr. Norris 327).

57 *Cant XV* (GNO VI 466,5–469,9; tr. Norris 495 ff.).

5 Conclusion

This survey of different aspects of virtue gives rise to the assumption that the alternative between ascribing a purely ethical or mystical orientation to Gregory's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* is not helpful in embracing its complexities. Gregory rather intertwines both dimension of Christian life through his concept of virtue.

In interpreting virtue theologically and identifying it with God, Gregory manages to combine inextricably both perspectives of human being: it is the very same orientation to God which means an orientation to the world and to others.⁵⁸ Here the ramifications of Gregory's understanding—in contrast to Origen—that it is not the mind itself, but the virtues who are the subject of divinization,⁵⁹ become apparent. This needs to be considered particularly regarding the spatial illustration of human's pursuit of the divine as an "ascent", for this does not mean an escapist spiritualization, but an earthly virtuousness, which takes one's fellow human beings and contemporary world into account.

Because he understands Christian life as a pursuit for divine virtue, Gregory binds virtuous behaviour and knowledge of God inseparably together. Both this relationship and the connection between the love of God and the love of neighbour show a reciprocity, which stems from the ultimate Christian paradox of God becoming human in the Incarnation.

The striving character of virtue indicates that for Gregory community with God cannot be found in static rest, but in dynamic movement. This accentuation arises not least from the setting of the *Canticum-Homilies*: Because they are addressed to already baptised persons, Gregory makes clear that Christian life goes on constantly. In contrast to prebaptismal, catechetical education Gregory puts special emphasis on the communal dimension of Christian life and on the intrinsic motivation for virtuous behaviour, which appears as an "internalization" of ethics.⁶⁰

58 Cf. in contrast R.M. Hübner, *Die Einheit des Leibes Christi bei Gregor von Nyssa. Untersuchungen zum Ursprung der „physischen“ Erlösungslehre*, Leiden 1974, 231, for whom both perspectives seem to exclude each other.

59 Laird, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Mysticism of Darkness: A Reconsideration", 613.

60 Following Gregory, God manifests in the *Song of Songs* "the blessed and most perfect way of salvation—I mean that which comes through love (διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης)" [*Cant* 1 (GNO VI 15,13–16,4); tr. Norris 16f.]. In contrast, Gregory describes other ways of salvation: either through fear in face of the threats of punishment, or because of the hope for rewards, or out of an expectation of recompense (*ibidem*). Surprisingly it is exactly through these last described ways Gregory tries to motivate catechumens in the Catechetical Oration to lead a good life, when he uses eschatological images to inculcate them with the necessity of

Gregory's emphasis on virtue in the Homilies points to the lasting significance of the bodily and opposes a sharp distinction between spiritual and corporal reality. In a similar way the Homilies portray the Christian as an individual standing before God but also integrated into the communal relation of the church being the body of Christ. Thus, it becomes clear that Gregory understands the way to and with God holistically.

In not giving up the connection between seemingly incompatible facets of virtue, Gregory proves to be an integratively thinking theologian.

Bibliography

- Boersma, H. "Saving Bodies: Anagogical Transposition in St. Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on the Song of Songs", *Ex Auditu* 26 (2010) 168–200.
- Cahill, J.B. "The Date and Setting of Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on the Song of Songs", *JThS* 32 (1981) 447–460.
- Crawford, N. "Bridging the Gap: Understanding Knowledge of God in Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on the Song of Songs", *The Asbury Journal* 65 (2010) 55–67.
- Daniélou, J. "Chronologie des œuvres de Grégoire de Nysse", in: F.L. Cross (ed.), *Papers presented to the Fourth International Conference on Patristic Studies in Oxford 1963*, StPatr VII, Berlin 1966, 159–169.
- Dünzl, F. *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993;
- Dünzl, F. "Die Canticum-Exegese des Gregor von Nyssa und des Origenes im Vergleich", *JbAC* 36 (1993) 94–109;
- Dünzl, F. *Gregor von Nyssa. In Canticum Canticorum Homiliae. Homilien zum Hohenlied*, Freiburg 1994.
- Gargano, G.-I. *La teoria di Gregorio di Nissa sul Cantico dei Cantici. Indagine su alcune indicazioni di metodo esegetico*, Rome 1981.
- Hübner, R.M. *Die Einheit des Leibes Christi bei Gregor von Nyssa. Untersuchungen zum Ursprung der „physischen“ Erlösungslehre*, Leiden 1974.
- Konstantinou, E.G. *Die Tugendlehre Gregors von Nyssa im Verhältnis zu der antik-philosophischen und jüdisch-christlichen Tradition*, Würzburg 1966.
- Laird, M. "Gregory of Nyssa and the Mysticism of Darkness: A Reconsideration", *The Journal of Religion* 79 (1999) 592–616;

leading a christian life (*Or cat* [GNO III/4 105,10–106,18; 32,7–23]). In catechetical education Gregory tries to motivate ethics extrinsically, whereas in postbaptismal, mystagogical education, Gregory does so intrinsically.

- Laird, M. "Under Solomon's Tutelage: The Education of Desire in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*", *Modern Theology* 18 (2002) 507–525.
- Leuenberger-Wenger, S. *Ethik und christliche Identität bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 2008.
- Mateo-Seco, L.F. "Virtue: ἀρετή", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 784–787.
- Maspero, G. "Cant", in: L.F. Mateo-Seco—G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden 2010, 121–125.
- Norris, R.A. "The Soul takes Flight: Gregory of Nyssa and the Song of Songs", *ATR* 80 (1998) 517–532;
- Norris, R.A. *Introduction to Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Atlanta 2012.
- Reyes Gacitúa, E. "El perfume del Esposo: Según Gregorio de Nisa en el Comentario al Cantar de los Cantares", *Teología y Vida* XLVIII (2007) 207–214.
- Shea, I.M. *The Church according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa's Homilies on the Cantic of Canticles*, Baltimore 1968.

Appendix: Reinhart Staats' Morning prayer

Church of Sant'Agostino, Rome, 17th September, 2014. Paulus schreibt im Philipperbrief 3,13–13: „Ich vergesse, was dahinten ist, strecke mich nach dem, was vor mir liegt und laufe so dem Ziele zu, hin zu dem Kampfpreis der himmlischen Berufung durch Gott in Jesus Christus“.

Dear Colleagues, liebe Kollegen, Schwestern und Brüder in Christus! Wir sind hier versammelt an einem wirklich ökumenischen Ort. Denn wir befinden uns hier in Roms Kirche San Agostino direkt vor dem Grab der Heiligen Monika, der Mutter des großen Kirchenvaters Augustin. Sie ist auch jedem studierten evangelischen Theologen aus den berühmten „Confessiones“ ihres Sohnes bekannt. Im August des Jahres 387 waren die letzten Tage der Mutter Monika in der Hafenstadt Ostia gekommen, wo sie dann auch bestattet worden wurde. Ihre Reliquien kamen 1483, nach mehr als tausend Jahren, hierher nach Rom und wurden umgebettet in diese damals neu gebaute Kirche „San Agostino“. Und in diese Stadt Rom war bald danach, im Dezember des Jahres 1510, vom deutschen Augustinerkloster Erfurt ein Augustinerpater bis hierher gepilgert, nämlich der Augustinerpater Martin Luther. Luther wohnte damals nahebei im Kloster San Agostino; denn er war beauftragt, vor dem Generalabt der Augustiner-Eremiten einige Streitfälle in deutschen Augustinerklöstern zu klären. Und gewiss hatte Luther damals auch an dieser Stelle vor dem Grab der heiligen Monika, wo wir nun an diesem Morgen versammelt sind, ein Gebet gesprochen.

Im neunten Buch seiner „Confessiones“ erinnert der Kirchenvater Augustin an sein letztes Gespräch mit seiner Mutter Monika kurz vor ihrem Sterben. Martin Luther hat mehrere Male in seinen Schriften aus diesem neunten Buch und dem Gespräch Augustins mit der Mutter Monika zitiert, besonders die Stelle, wo Augustin selbst klar geworden war, dass sogar seine eigene Mutter, der er selbst doch seine eigene Bekehrung zum Glauben an Jesus Christus verdankt hatte, auch nicht sündlos gewesen war. Denn ihr Sohn schrieb in den Confessiones: „Ich wage nicht zu sagen, dass seit dem Tage, da Du [o Gott] ihr in der Taufe die Wiedergeburt schenktest, kein Wort aus ihrem Munde gegen dein Gebot verstoßen hätte ... Und wehe auch einem lobenswerten Menschenleben, wolltest du es ohne dein Erbarmen durchforschen“ (*vae etiam laudibili vitae hominem, si remota misericordia discutias eam*).¹ Auch die heiligsten Men-

¹ Augustinus, *Confessiones* 9,13,34 gehört im Gesamtwerk Martin Luthers zu seinen Lieblingszitaten: H.U. Delius, *Augustin als Quelle Luthers*, Berlin 1984, S. 37.

schen sind auf das Erbarmen Gottes angewiesen, umso mehr wir, die wir nicht zu den „Heiligen“ zählen.

Das Gespräch Augustins mit der totkranken Mutter geschah in Ostia an einem offenen Fenster: „Schon nahte der Tag, da sie aus diesem Leben scheiden sollte ... da traf es sich, wie ich glaube durch deine geheime Fügung [o Gott], dass wir beide allein, ich und sie, an ein Fenster gelehnt standen ... wir unterhielten uns also köstlich innig, und wir vergaßen, was hinter uns ist und streckten uns nach dem, was vor uns liegt“ (*praeterita obliviscentes in ea quae ante sunt, extenti*). Augustin zitiert also die Worte des Apostels Paulus, die auch ich gerade zu Beginn meiner kleinen Predigt hier zitiert hatte (Phil. 3, 13–14). Sogar angesichts des Sterbens können sich die Christen erwartungsvoll, ja hoffnungsvoll noch vorne strecken und aus dem Fenster in die Weite schauen, „und sie laufen so dem Ziele zu, hin zu dem Kampfpfeis der himmlischen Berufung durch Gott in Jesus Christus“. Der niederländische Maler Ary Schaffer hatte diese Augustin-Monika-Szene in einem berühmten Bild in Dordrecht festgehalten. Überhaupt ist das Bild einer Frau „am Fenster“ in der Neuzeit und besonders in der Romantik ein beliebtes Motiv im Kunstschaffen europäischer Maler geworden.

Erfahrungsgemäß geschieht aber heutzutage die seelische Orientierung des Menschen, zumal des seiner körperlich-psychischen Behinderung und seines Älterwerdens bewussten modernen Menschen meist ganz anders; der Blick geht nach innen und zurück. Wir Menschen des dritten Jahrtausends wollen noch einmal neu anfangen, wir wollen es noch mal packen. Wir wollen nicht resignieren. Wir wollen nicht ins dunkle Nichts fallen. „Der Himmel soll warten, ich hab'noch was vor“. Das singen sehr laut Menschen in einem Altersheim (so in einem Film vorige Woche im deutschen Fernsehen). Auch wir Christen, Frauen und Männer, Junge und Alte, wollen ja nicht sterben. Doch diese Angst viel mehr vor dem Sterben und kaum vor dem Tod, ist ein Phänomen erst unserer modernen Zeit. Die Angst vor dem Sterben, nicht vor dem Tod ist wirklich ein Zeichen unserer Zeit! Wir blicken dann lieber zurück in unser eigenes Leben und erinnern uns an glücklichere Tage. So sind Geburtstage wichtige und schöne Tage der Erinnerung des modernen Menschen geworden. Aber wir Kirchenhistoriker wissen es doch: Die Geburtstage eines Menschen waren in früheren Jahrhunderten wichtiger für Astrologen als für Christen, die freilich des Tages ihrer Taufe, meist sehr bald nach der Geburt, gedachten. Freilich gedenken Christen auch heute kaum der leiblichen „Geburtstage“ von Heiligen und Märtyrern, sondern sie gedenken ihrer besonders an ihren „Sterbetagen“.

Ich darf mir erlauben, hier an dieser Gedenkstätte der heiligen Monika einige Sätze Martin Luthers, des früheren Augustinermönches und sehr guten Kenners Augustins, zu zitieren: „Unsere Lebenszeit ist ‚Urlaub auf Erden‘ ...

Also geht der Mensch durch die enge Pforte des Todes hinaus aus diesem Leben, und obwohl der Himmel und die Welt, wo wir jetzt leben, groß und weit angesehen wird; so ist doch alles gegen den zukünftigen Himmel viel enger und kleiner als der Leib einer Mutter [im Vergleich] gegen diesen Himmel ist. Darum heißt der lieben Heiligen Sterben eine neue Geburt, und ihr Fest nennt man auf Latein ‚Natale‘, einen Tag ihrer Geburt ... Also im Sterben auch muss man sich der Angst erwägen und wissen, dass danach ein großer Raum und Freude sein wird“.²

Heute beginnt unser „XIII. Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa“. Der ja nicht nur für mich unvergessene Kardinal Jean Daniélou hatte den griechischen Begriff „epektasis“ als ein Kennwort der ganzen Theologie unseres Kirchenvaters Gregor erkannt.³ Es begegnet aber nur ein einziges Mal in Neuen Testament, nämlich in diesem Satz des Apostels Paulus: „Ich vergesse was dahinten ist und strecke mich nach dem, was vor mir liegt“: *tois emprosthen epekteinomenos*. Gregor von Nyssa, der dieses Ausstrecken nach dem, was vor einem liegt, so sehr liebte, hatte auch erkannt, wie wichtig der Heilige Geist in unserem Leben ist, der unser Leben mit Sinn erfüllt, so dass wir uns, auch bei leider getrennten Konfessionen, in christlicher Gemeinschaft stets neu zusammenfinden können. Denn als gute orthodoxe, katholische und evangelische Christen, die wir sein wollen, dürfen wir alle, beschenkt mit Heiligem Geist, „der Leben schafft“, uns ausstrecken nach dem, was vor uns liegt. Amen.

² Luther, *Ein Sermon von Bereitung zum Sterben* (1519), in: WA 2, 338–386.

³ J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et Théologie Mystique*, Paris 1953, 291–303.

Index locorum

Vetus Testamentum

Genesis

1.26	70, 132
1.3	188
1.6–8	245n56
2.8–9	491n36, 493n51
2.9	503
2.16–17	6, 20
2.17	79, 79n10
3.21	139, 266n14, 430n7, 503
4.1–16	135

Exodus

3–4.17	494n62
4.1–5	494n60
4.6–7	494n61
7.8–12	494n60
13.21	494n66
14.15–29	262n59
16	494n63
20	363
20.21	162, 191
26	532n26
30.23	62
33.20	32, 210, 489n25
34	494n64
37.4	139n10

Numeri

15.17–21	236
17.17	140
20.11	445n7

Deuteronomium

15.9	392
32.39	39, 146n57, 449, 504

1 Regum

10.1–13	259n29
---------	--------

Iob

23–10	435n40
-------	--------

Psalmi

6	141
17.2	363n12
22	16, 23, 39, 146n57
22.4	39, 146n57
23.4d	449
59	330
61	19, 323n72, 329n114
61.1	323n72
61.2	329n114
67.32	129
91	349
99(98).7	495n66
103.15	40
113.16	270n44, 341
118	439n58
120	439n58
120.6	140n16
136.1	57
145	349n31

Proverbia

4.6	268
6.8	13, 61n51
8.17–21	190n69
9.1	139n9
10.20	467
11.20	184
17.3	435n40
20.6	393n15
23.13–14	39, 146n57

Ecclesiastes (Qohelet)

3.13	53
------	----

Canticum Canticorum

1.1	297
1.1–4	6, 151n89
1.2	261n49, 263, 356
1.2a	130n28
1.3	64n74, 94n66, 182, 224, 343
1.4	44, 67n89, 190, 297, 343

1.5	8, 71, 95, 144n44, 206, 256	2.16	190, 297
1.5-8	8	3.1	11, 151n90, 173, 190
1.6	139, 206n42, 206n47, 489n23, 490n33, 491n40	3.1-4	173, 190
1.7	33, 352, 439, 487n11	3.1-8	11
1.8	74, 191, 391, 398	3.2	65n79, 297
1.9	262, 344n16, 510	3.3	30
1.9-12	466n1	3.4	297
1.9-13	9	3.7	140, 141n29
1.10	414, 147	3.7-8	110n130, 266n13, 411
1.11	65n79, 183-184, 206n46	3.9-4.7	12
1.12	111n138	3.10-11	411n39
1.14	277n91, 493n54	4.1	148, 297
1.15	9, 151n90, 297	4.2	92, 260, 260n33, 297
1.15-2.7	9	4.3	297
1.16	32, 66, 187, 209, 490n28	4.4	148n75
1.16-17	209	4.6	297
1.17	148n70	4.8	13, 188, 256-257, 257n13, 351
2.1	147	4.8-9	13
2.1-2	297	4.8-15	256
2.2	145	4.9	31-32, 130n27, 180, 215
2.3	219n114, 297, 493n49	4.10-15	13, 189
2.4	297	4.11	146
2.4-5	345	4.12	297, 440n64, 490n33
2.5	37, 365n20, 433n28	4.12, 15	297
2.5-6	364n20	4.12-16	303n71
2.6	38, 301	4.13	147, 297, 490n33
2.7	147	4.13-14	142
2.8-9	300n56, 382n17, 491n36, 493n51	4.13-15	189
2.8-13	300	4.14	61, 256
2.8-17	10	4.16	14, 153n105
2.9	61, 152, 297	4.16-5.2	14
2.10	358n56	4.16-5.1	297
2.10-11	340	5.1	14, 269n32, 297, 302n70, 410
2.10-13	299	5.2	14, 34n24, 140, 140n20, 177, 191, 205n36, 212, 215n93, 229, 269n32, 270n47
2.11	270n44	5.2-3	14, 140n20
2.11-13	300, 302-304, 307- 308	5.2-6	297
2.13	185	5.2-7	177
2.13-15	394n54	5.2-8	212
2.14	101n97, 188	5.3	130n28, 138, 146n56, 189, 258, 260, 266n14
2.14-15	188		
2.15	266n12, 409n33, 493n53	5.4	213

Canticum Canticorum (cont.)

5.4-5	67n88
5.5	15, 257, 262, 358n56, 439
5.5-7	15
5.5-6	257
5.6	39, 65n81
5.7	297
5.8-12	16, 499
5.9	207, 243n41
5.9-16	243n41
5.10-16	44
5.11	248
5.12	57n20, 281
5.12-13	297
5.13	17, 54-55, 148n73, 258, 262
5.13-16	17
5.15	139
5.16	249, 488n18
6.1	18, 215
6.1-9	18, 417
6.2	297, 302n70, 492n47
6.3	71, 132, 132n32
6.3a	132
6.5	297, 408
6.6	297
6.7	145, 297
6.8	53, 75, 141n24

6.8-9c	53
6.9	68, 95
6.11	490n33
7.9	490n33
8.11-12	490n33

Sapientia

3.6	435n40
7.26	278n95

Isaias

5.1-7	491n34
6.1-7	446
9.5	18
27.3	491n34
45.23	323n71
48.10	435n40
63.2	345
65.17	246
66.20	140n16

Ezechiel

22.20-22	435n40
----------	--------

Osee

11.10	190
-------	-----

Malachias

435n40

Novum Testamentum

Matthaeus

5.6	355
5.8	348n28, 349
5.14-16	506
5.37	504
8.10	14
9	342
9.5-6	358n56
9.15-16	485n1
10.10	139
13.1-9	491n34
13.13 ss	139n15, 238n18
13.18-23	491n34
13.33	238n18
16.16-19	126
17.2	139

18.12-14	488n14
19.5	490n30
21.33-44	491n34
22.2-14	485n1
22.14	239
22.37-39	17
22.37-40	135
22.40	139n12
25.1-13	485n1
25.35-36	19, 141
27.46	51

Marcus

2.19-20	485n1
2.21	139
4.1-9	491n34

4.13–20	491n34	17.21	43, 204, 320, 365n26
12.1–12	491n34	17.21–23	204, 320
15.4	51	17.22	43, 204n20, 229
<i>Lucas</i>		17.22–23	43
1.79	215	19.41	310n99
3.8	341	20.15	310n99
3.22	67n94	20.22	43
5.32	256n4	<i>Acta Apostolorum</i>	
5.34–35	485n1	2.36	222n123
7.36–50	356	10.10–16	66n83
8.4–8	491n34	10.47–48	258
8.11–15	491n34	17	499
10.25–37	249n72	<i>Romanos</i>	
10.29–36	488n18	1.3	228
10.30	215, 249n74	1.8	498n2
10.30–37	488n17	1.20	44, 245, 498, 498n5,
15.3–7	488n14		499–500, 504, 507
19.16	141	6.1–10	410n32
20.9–18	491n34	6.1.11	410n33
20.36	432n24	6.4	256, 256n7, 257,
<i>Ioannes</i>			257n10, 258n21, 262,
1.1	466		358n56
1.1–3	180n4, 183, 220	6.4–5	262n55
1.14	188, 209, 213, 220–	7.23	135, 414n52
	221, 244	8	239, 367n32, 370n43
1.18	30	8.7	412n42, 414n52
1.32	68n96	8.14–27	367
3.3	125, 257, 261	8.23	344n13
3.3–5	261	8.24	344n13
3.5	257	8.29	71n120
3.16–17	489n22	8.35	319
3.29	485n1	8.38–39	319
4.14	34	9–11	239
4.24	125	11.5	237
7.37	130	11.6	235
10.4	488n16	11.7	239
10.11–16	487n13	11.11	236
10.26–28	487n13	11.14	237
12.24	262n56	11.16	235, 236n13, 237–
12.32	325n84		240, 240n27,
13.5	258		241–242, 247–248,
14.2	535		253
14.23	37	11.16–24	236n13
15.1–8	491n34	11.19	237
17	19, 43, 204, 320, 335,	11.23	237, 240
	365n26	11.26	236
17.5	43	11.23	236, 240

Romanos (cont.)

11.28	237
11.29	237
12.6	125
13.12	414n52
13.32	501
14.11	323

I Corinthios

2.9	349
2.10	190n72
3.9	491n37
3.11	139
5.6	238
6.17	133, 190
8.2	270n46
11.15	513n28
12.12	243n45
13.8	334n162
13.11	347n22
13.12	278n96
15	196n98
15.20	241
15.23-24	328
15.23-28	330n120
15.25-26	328n108
15.26	322n66
15.28	246, 313, 319n44, 323, 325, 327-329
15.50	239n21

II Corinthios

3.6	6, 141n30
3.18	277, 277n92, 277n93, 286
4.6	318n36
4.10	505n39
5.4	514
5.17	246n58, 248
6.7	414n52
6.9	505n40
10.4	414n52
11.2	188, 490n32
12	344n14, 348
12.2	348n29
12.3-6	466
12.4	380n3
12.3-6	466

Galatas

2.9	139
2.19	439n58
2.20	227n140
3.27	256
4.24	137n14
6.17	449n23

Ephesios

2.10	499
3.6	189
3.10-12	152, 225
3.18	325n86
4.13	31
4.11-16	134
5.2	241
5.28	438n55
5.31-32	491n32
5.32	188
6.10-13	414n52

Philippenses

2.6	180n3, 183, 220, 466
2.6-9	209
2.7	210, 490n26
2.9	205
2.10	223
2.15	256, 506
3	357
3.12	348n27
3.13	53, 134, 187, 318n37, 343, 348
3.21	345
4.7	184n27

Colossenses

1.15	240, 261n46
1.18	248n68, 261n46
2.5	245, 245n56
3.1	241
3.1-4	188
3.9	259n38
3.9-10	139
3.10	246, 318n36, 318n38

I Thessalonicenses

5.5	261
-----	-----

1 Timotheum

2.4	319n41, 333n151
2.9-10	513n28
3.16	188, 209, 213, 215, 220
6.16	30
13.15	206n43

Titum

2.11	410
3.4	489n22
3.5	256, 259-260

Hebraeos

1.3	180n2, 183, 466
4.14	219n114
4.15	42, 213, 493n50
5.14	69
6.7	246
7.14	215
11.8-9	172

1 Ioannis

4.8-9	489n22
4.8-16	11, 36n32

Auctores antiqui et medii aevi**Aetius**

403,2-4	280
403,3	280
403,14-21	280
405,10-15	280

Alexander of Aphrodisias*De anima mantissa*

134,28-136,28	280
135,8	280
135,23	280
136,17	280
137,1	280

In De sensu

24,14-22	279 f.
56,12-16	280
60,4-7	280
146,23	280

Ambrogio Traversari*Epistulae*

VIII 3	104, 396
VIII 5	78, 104, 396

Ambrosius*De Isaac et anima*

4,22-30	158
---------	-----

Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam

prol. 2	158
---------	-----

Aristoteles*De anima*

434a18 f.	278
-----------	-----

De Generatione et Corruptione

328a	509
------	-----

De interpretatione

	480
--	-----

Ethica Nichomachea

1106a	541
-------	-----

1178b	47
-------	----

Historia Animalium

613a14	61
--------	----

Poetica

1459a7-8	486
----------	-----

Rhetorica

1405a9-10	486
-----------	-----

Athanasius Alexandrinus*Fragmenta in Cantica*

1347-1362	485
-----------	-----

Apologia Contra Arianos

IV 11	498
-------	-----

De Incarnatione

3	342
---	-----

6	342
---	-----

54.3	247
------	-----

Contra gentiles

2,1-2	342
-------	-----

8,1-4	342
-------	-----

Augustinus*De Genesi ad litteram*

III 19-24	396
-----------	-----

Confessiones

IX 13,34	551
----------	-----

Basilius Caesariensis*Ad adolescentes se legendis libris gentilium*

4 304

Adversus Eunomium

I 6 476

I 12 474

II 22,47–48 553

In illud: Attende tibi ipsi 392*Homiliae in hexaemeron*

5 259

II 2–3 384

II 3 384

VII 5 383

IX 4 383

De Spiritu Sancto

9,23 367

Epistulae

234 384

Asceticon magnum

17 520

Ps.-Basilius*Enarratio in prophetam Isaiam*

V 162,20–22 157

Bonaventura de Balneoregio*Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*

d. 8, p. 2, art. un., q. 6

163

Cicero*De senectate*

15–17 293

Clemens Alexandrinus*Excerpta ex Theodoto*

56,3 238

58,1–2 239

Paedagogus

II 2,19,3 493

Protrepticus

81,2 498

Quis dives salvetur

XXXVIII 1 411

Stromata

I 28,176 157

III 5,42,1–2 522

VII 16,101,3 519

Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus*Catechesis*

13,31 487

Gregory of Cyprus*De processione spiritus Sancti*

281C 388

Demetrius*De elocutione*

128 305

132 305

137–155 305

163 305

166 305

168 305

173–185 305

Diogenes Laertius*Vitae Philosophorum*

VII 53 477

VII 117 268

IX 7,44 280

X 32 477

Dionysius Halicarnassensis*De Demosthene*

36 305

De Isocrate

2 306

Ps.-Dionysius*De divinis nominibus*

1,4 337

2,9 337

2,9–10 336

3,2 336

3,2–3 336

4 368

4,1 338

4,10 338

4,12 338

4,14 337

4,15–17 336

7,2 337

Dionysius Exiguus*Periphyseon*

394

Eusebius Caesariensis*Praeparatio Evangelica*

XI 27,5	273
---------	-----

Firmicus Maternus*De erroribus*

6,1–5	272
-------	-----

Ioannes Picus Mirandula

<i>Apologia</i>	397
-----------------	-----

Disputationes adversus Astrologiam

IV 4	397
------	-----

Heptaplus

IV Proem.	398
-----------	-----

<i>Oratio</i>	399
---------------	-----

Gregorius Nazianzenus*Epistulae*

202	312
214	435, 441

Orationes

14,14	55
28,3	384
28,5	499
28,21	474
28,29	474
30,17	385
38,7	384
40,3	259

Gregorius Nyssenus*Ad Ablabium, Quod non sint tres dei* (ed.

F. Müller, GNO III/1, Leiden 1958, 37–57)

44,10	157n7
44,10–16	61n53
49,5	157n7
50,13	157n7
55,14–19	513n30

Ad Eustathium, De Sancta Trinitate (ed.

F. Müller, GNO III/1, Leiden 1958, 1–16)

6,8–11	513n30
8,3–20	470n20
14,6	157n7
14,7–17	468n5
14,16–18	478n58, 479n60

Ad Petrum fratrem de differentia essentiae et hypostaseos (= Basilius, *Epistula* 38; ed.

Y. Courtonne, Basile, Lettres I, Paris 1957)

367

*Adversos Arium et Sabellium, De Patre et**Filio* (ed. F. Müller, GNO III/1, Leiden 1958, 71–85)

73	215n92
----	--------

Adversos Macedonianos, De Spiritu Sancto

(ed. F. Müller, GNO III/1, Leiden 1958, 89–115)

104, 8–15	380n8
-----------	-------

Ad Theophilum adversus Apolaristas (ed.

F. Müller, GNO III/1, Leiden 1958, 117–128)

126,14–127,10	515n36
---------------	--------

Antirrheticus adversus Apolarium (ed.

F. Müller, GNO III/1, Leiden 1958, 131–233)

132–135	222n125
---------	---------

142,5–15	413n47
----------	--------

151–152	488n16
---------	--------

160,9–10	225n134
----------	---------

161,16–26	224n129
-----------	---------

201,6–24	514n32
----------	--------

217,15–21	513n27
-----------	--------

Apologia in Hexaemeron (ed. H.R. Drobner,

GNO IV/1, Leiden 2009)

II, 2–3	384n25
---------	--------

VII, 5	383n24
--------	--------

IX, 4	383n24
-------	--------

Contra Eunomium I (ed. W. Jaeger, GNO I, Leiden 1960, 22–225)

25–29	468n5
-------	-------

66,15–17	452n31
----------	--------

73,16–75,24	222n125
-------------	---------

75,3–5	527n2, 536n39
--------	---------------

86,22 ff.	160n16
-----------	--------

95,25–96,2	527n2, 536n39
------------	---------------

105–113	63n71, 76, 187n46,
---------	--------------------

	198, 380n7, 389
--	-----------------

109–110	166n39
---------	--------

114,5–19	219n15
----------	--------

132	504n34
-----	--------

137,4–6	468n5
---------	-------

146,10–20	331n137
-----------	---------

147,10–11	332n140
-----------	---------

149	501n18, 505n42
-----	----------------

149,5	500n11
-------	--------

150 ff.	160n16
---------	--------

151–152	501n15
---------	--------

169,20–170,3	332n139
--------------	---------

190,16–192,8	64n73
--------------	-------

191,21	527n3
--------	-------

204,18–206,6	64n73
--------------	-------

Contra Eunomium II (ed. W. Jaeger, GNO I,
Leiden 1960, 226–409)

238	64n73
245,18–24	363n10
253,25–28	173n6
255,1–3	160n15
255, 1–8	425n23
256,23–25	468n5
256,24 ff.	158n11
257,21–25	468n5
257,21–22	160n15
259,26–260,27	159n12
260,10–13	473n37, 474n37
267,24–27	478n55
267, 27–28	382n14
267,14–277,27	475n43
270,26–271,2	382n15
270,29–31	478n56
273,18–20	479n61
277,7–26	476n47
290,3–291,11	405n12
335,11	527n3
343,20–25	473n37
348,22–349,16	481n79
360,22	527n3
365, 15–22	504n34
389,29	527n3
397,8	157n7

Contra Eunomium III (ed. W. Jaeger, GNO II,
Leiden 1960, 3–311)

10–27	81n8
17–18	472n29
11–13	81n8
18	81n8
19	66n86
45,1–2	166n40
57–61	81n15
60, 9	388n50
60–61	81n6
66–71	81n15
68	488n16
69	81n6
69,22–70,13	246n58
92,16	167n42
119–120	66n86
121–122	325n85, 325n86
131–132	66n86
132–133	515n37
168	309n97

178,15–179,13	478n57
179,23–27	468n5
180,20–23	479n63
180,24–25,1–11	480n65
181,13–24	478n57
181,19	479,63
186,14–15	470n17
187,9–11	472n36, 481n74
197,8–10	480n68
197,27–198,1–2	470n17
242,9–18	478n57
279,18–19	468n5
285,8–10	472n29
292,23	157n7

De anima et resurrectione (ed. A. Spira–
E. Mühlenberg, GNO III/3, Leiden 2014)

11–12	477n51
25–27	469n13
37	518n4
39,12 ff.	157n7
42	518n3
42,7–8	167n42
51,12–14	331n23
65,9–72,18	441n68
66,4–67,8	437n50
66,11–18	318n32
71,11–74,2	320n45
71,5–11	320n48
71,9–11	333n147
74,3–9	331n26
74,14–75,1	331n31
77,12	331n30
77,12–14	329n13
78,6–79,3	320n47
78–79	470n20
90–91	400n46
93,8–9	160n15
112,18–19	331n24
113,4–5	331n25
115,19–116,2	322n58
115,19–20	321n54, 322n58
122,1–6	331n28

De beatitudinibus (ed. J.F. Callahan, GNO
VII/2, Leiden 1992, 75–170)

80,17–20	534n36
83	479n63
90–91	215n92
95,18–20	530n20
104	479n63

104,20–22 470n20
 110 355n51
 110–111 355n50, 355n52
 111,17–20 522n23
 119–120 521n15
 120 522n21
 124,11–14 470n20
 124,13–14 372n30
 141,1–27 167n16
 141,6–15 469n11
 141, 25–27 383n23
 141–142 472n27
 142,13–15 469n9
 144,11–12 469n13
 151 321n55
De deitate adversus Evagrium (ed. E. Gebhardt, GNO IX, Leiden 1967, 329–341)
 337–338 128n23
 340,4–19 129n24
 341,1–12 129n25
De hominis opificio (ed. G.H. Forbes, Burntisland 1855; PG 44, 123–256)
 Praef. 2 393n12
 Praef. 3 392n13
 II 511n9
 II 1 393n16, 399n43
 III 2 394n19
 V 476n48
 VI 476n49, 511n9
 X 474n41
 XVI 245n50
 XVI 11 400n46
 XIX–XX 520n12
 XX 520n9, 522n23
 XXI 330n17, 333n148,
 413n47
 XXIX 413n47
De infantibus praemature abreptis (ed. H. Hörner, GNO III/2, Leiden 1987, 65–97)
 77,12–20 511n9
 85–86 477n51
De instituto Christiano (ed. W. Jaeger, GNO VIII/1, Leiden 1952, 1–89)
 40,10 432n21
 41,11 432n21
 48,1–11 471n21
De mortuis (ed. G. Heil, GNO IX, Leiden 1967, 1–68)
 15,64 317n30

19 316n24
 20,74,1–3 321n53
 29,9–10 529n18
 29–31 522n23
 29,24–30,7 522n23
 36,2–7 523n27
 36,7–10 523n25
 60,26–27 316n23
 67,1–5 518n3
De oratione dominica (ed. J.F. Callahan, GNO VII/2, Leiden 1992, 1–74)
 23 479n63
 23,12–21 470n20
 23,15–18 470n17
 51–52 521n15
 53 492n45
De perfectione (ed. W. Jaeger, GNO VIII/1, Leiden 1952, 143–214)
 175,14–176,11 222n124
 194,14–196,15 245n49
 194–195 325n87
 203,8–20 455n6
 205,6–9 470n20
 212–214 167n41
 213–214 352n39
De professione Christiana (ed. W. Jaeger, GNO VIII/1, Leiden 1952, 129–142)
 138,14 ff. 160n16
De tridui inter mortem et resurrectionem Domini nostri Iesu Christi spatio (ed. E. Gebhardt, GNO IX, Leiden 1967, 271–306)
 273,10–274,7 512n24
 285,7–286,12 330n118
 285,23 330n119
 297 512n24
 298–303 325n85
De virginitate (ed. J.P. Cavarinos, GNO VIII/1, Leiden 1952, 215–343)
 259,4–10 510n15
 277 518n3
 278 518n3
 279 343n7
 280 343n7
 284,27–285,8 510n15
 288 518n3
 288–289 469n10
 288–290 472n33
 289, 15–19 379n2

De virginitate (ed. J.P. Cavarinos, GNO VIII/1,
Leiden 1952, 215–343) (*cont.*)

290,14–291,4	404n4
291	521n14
292	472n28
292,10–15	404n5
296	469n12, 476n48
296,1–20	406n13
298,19–299,14	167n42
299,14–302,4	405n10
299,23–25	393n17
303,23–304,10	510n15
339,1–22	510n15

De vita Gregorii Thaumaturgi (ed. G. Heil,
GNO X/1, Leiden 1990, 3–57)

13,11	313
-------	-----

De vita Moysis (ed. H. Musurillo, GNO VII/1,
Leiden 1964)

4,10–12	162n22
4,11 f.	542n23
5	51n78
22,16–23	468n5
33–35	493n57
34,8–14	165n34
34,11–13	285n128
38,15–39,5	405n12
39	494n62
40,4–13	405n12
40,20–25	406n13
41–42	494n61
42,1–9	471n21
42–43	494n60
43, 21–44,23	405n12
52–53	492n45
56,24–27	400n46
57,8–58,3	320n49, 324n82
62,9–63,9	413n47
68,8–69,3	405n11
71,3–19	413n47
77–78	494n63
86,11–87,13	406n16
87	30n15, 49n76, 330n121
87, 23–88,5	49n76
88,1–5	468n5
88,5–10	544n37
91–92	494n65
92,8–12	468n5
97,18–19	160n15

99	61n58
99,13	544n37
101,4–8	510n16
102,7	544n37
107–108	494n64
110,5–115,14	406n16
114,9–14	404n5
118,3–13	163n26
118,20	162n22, 542n23
120,5–18	471n21
120,17	333n153
124,4–7	471n21
126	493n55
126–128	492n45
135–136	520n11
192,1	334n160
214,10	333n153
239	505n42
252	505n44
284	541n13
370,12	333n153, 513n28

Epistula canonica ad Letoium episcopum (ed.
E. Mühlberg, GNO III/5, Leiden 2008)

1–2	413n47
-----	--------

Epistulae (ed. G. Pasquali, GNO VIII/2, Leiden
1959)

I 30	126n16
II	452n31
II 18–19	125n14
III 15	512n25
III 19–22	495n67
III,22	513n29
XVII 11	126n18
XX	297, 299
XX 9–10	298n43
XX 11	298n44
XX 12	298n45
XX 15	298n46
XXI	312

In canticum canticorum (ed. H. Langerbeck,
GNO VI, Leiden 1960)

3-3	54n7
3-4	422n18
3-13	364n17
4	421n13
4,7	539n3
4,10–13	25n9
4,10–7,16	81n18
4,10–12,19	398n36

5	138n6, 149n77,14, 421n14, 421n15	22,15–23,6 22,16–23,1	82n21 189n66, 482n75
5–7	416n2	22,16–23,16	482n75
5,8 f.	540n7	22,18–23,1	509n5
6–7	137n3, 414n52	22,25	422n17
6,8–10	278n97	23–24	454n4
6,14–7,1	549n10	23,1–6	189n68
7,16–10,4	204n19	23,1–12	509n7
10,15–16	447n14	23,3	189n67
11	366n29	23,3–7	164n29
13,3	137n1	23,12	334n159
13,3–5	78n4	23,16–17	509n6
13,9–20	58n31	24,4–9	259n23
13,18–21	53n2	24,9–12	263n63
14	149n77	24,12–25,1	268n28
14,13–15,2	252n86	25	454n4
14,13–16,14	6, 21	25,6 ff.	72n121
14,18–19	256n2	25,12–26,10	59n37
15	333n150, 416n4	27,5–8	517n1
15,4–6	513n28	27,8–15	431n17, 432n22
15,12	38n36, 157n6	27,9	72n124, 437n49
15,13–16,4	547n60	27,9–12	437n49
15,13–16,14	454n3	27,11 f.	268n31
15,15–16,10	392n9	28	150n78
16–17	422n16	28,7 ff.	62n63
16,14–27,5	454n3	28,21–29,1	70n
17	367n30	29	364n18
17,2–7	204n21, 205n35, 228n146	29,3–6	268n29
17,7–22,9	81n8	29,7–12	431n16
17,10 f.	265n2	29,15 f.	267n20
17,10–18,10	267n18	29,20–30,12	28n12
17,11	38n37	29,20–31,8	411n37
17,12–18,10	540n4	29,20–30,5	430n10
18,7–23,1	267n16	30,3	156n6
18,9	265n2	30,3–5	267n20
18,10–22,9	81n9	30,7–8	432n25
18,10–22,10	7, 21	31–32	368n35, 454n4
19,4–8	268n24	31,3–6	72n126
19,10–13	529n12, 530n19	31,5–32,8	269n43
21,7	268n25	31,5–8	523n27
21,15–23,1	268n27	31,11	49n77
22	133, 156n2, 458n22	32,6–8	268n31
22,7–12	156n5	32,11–15	174n8
22,9–15	82n20	32,16	49n77
22,9–23,1	528n9, 530n21	32,17	204n22
22,10–25,1	7,21	33,2–5	263n65
22,13–17	156n5	33,10–11	430n6
22,15	72n123	33,17–18	174n9
		34	522n24

In canticum canticorum (ed. H. Langerbeck,
GNO VI, Leiden 1960) (*cont.*)

34-35 370n43
 34,1 ff. 7, 69n99
 34,2 f. 269n35
 34,5-18 269n37
 35 366n27
 35,9 174n10
 35,13-14 175n11
 35,16-36,4 545n45
 36 19, 150n82, 152n94,
 477n51
 36/37 477n51
 36,5 542n23
 36,12 8, 21, 27n11, 514
 36,12 f. 182n13, 8, 21, 27,
 64n75
 36,12 ff. 64n75
 36,12-37,9 514n33
 36,12-38,2 8, 21, 27n11
 36,13-15 182n13
 36,14 182n11
 36,15-17 182n14
 36,16-37,7 468n5
 36,17 182n11
 36,18-20 182n15
 36,20-37, 1-7,9-11 382n11
 37,1 382n11
 37,6 224n131
 38 152n94, 343n9
 38-39 343n9
 38,16 72n124
 39-40 343n10
 39,5-9 190n70
 39,9-11 190n71
 39,10-11 460n35
 39,14-15 437n48
 39,15-40,1 541n20
 39,19-40,12 190n73
 40 344n11, 344n15,
 454n4
 40,5 261n48
 40,7-8 437n48
 40,10-12 448n19
 40,13-21 40,13-21n58
 41,9-10 176n14
 41,11 176n15
 43-44 60n39
 44 220n16

44,2-7 510n10
 44,9 f. 265n2
 44,9-10 532n25
 44,10-16 533n30
 45 144n42, 144n43
 45,3 532n27
 45,5 532n28
 45,12 533n31
 45,13 532n29
 45,14-15 533n31
 45,2,6-8,13-15 259n26
 46 144n45
 46,8-13 206n43
 46,13 206n41
 46,15 206n43
 46,16-17 439n60
 48,18-49,1 206n43
 48,18-49,4 256n5
 49,17 38n38
 50,14-16 206n42
 50-60 457n15
 51,10-13 205n36
 51,13 71n17
 51,19 f. 206n42
 52 138n6, 152n95
 52,8-53,2 261n47
 52,17-53,2 261n50
 53,10-57,16 8, 21
 53,13-15 3n1
 53 144n42
 53,15 ff. 73n136
 54 347n23, 353n45
 55 150n82, 372n49,
 458n19
 55-56 458n19
 55,3-7 167n43, 529n17
 56,5-11 529n14, 529n18
 57-60 491n39
 57,9-12 492n41
 58,13 ff. 57n23
 59 355n49
 59,1 356n53
 60 492n42
 60,1-22 405n10
 60,4 ff. 70n11, 71n16
 60,18 430n7
 60,21 533n32
 61 487n10, 488n16
 61,1-3 34n23, 534n34

61,1-62,13	216n97	85,10-87,17	467n3
61,3	529n15	85,15-19	65n79, 183n23
61,4-13	205n29	85,15-86,12	206n46
61,13-17	33n22, 471n26, 481n73, 534n35	85,16	184n32
61,14-15	205n37	85,16-86,1	380n3
62,1-7	39n41	85,19f.	183n23
62,3-7	34n25	85,20	184n32
62,4	204n22	85,20-86,12	184n24
63	353n43, 353n44	86-87	458n18
63,18-20	391n6	86,1	184n32
64,2f.	281m12	86,2-5,7-10	180n5
64,2-3	529n10	86,2-6	183n20
67	143n37	86,4-5	380n5
67,8-10	391n4	86,6f.	180n4
67,8-69,20	9,21	86,6-10	380n4
67,10-11	74n143	86,8	184n32
67,17-68,10	392n7	86,10-12	183n21
68,7-10	164n30	86,12-18	184n25
68,8	476n48	86,12-87,8	468n5
68,10-11	393n14	86,13	184n32
68,15-16	470n19	86,15-18	278n98, 382m12
68,19-69,2	393m18	86,19-87,5	382n13
70-72	455n7, 457n16	87,2-5	184n26
70,14-71,8	542n21	87,2-5	379n1
71,5-8	470n20	87,5-8	184n28
71,14-18	259n28	87,7f.	184n32
72,8-73,1	541m16	87,8-17	184n29
73-78	456n8	87,10	184n32
73,2-78,4	206n44, 9	87,12-15	184n30
74	344n16	87,1-17	481n72
75	344n16, 459n28	87,12-16	480n66
76-77	458n18	87,17-88,6	184n31, 472n31
76,16-77,8	263n60	88-89	458n21, 461n36
77	462n40	89f.	194n93
78,5-82,16	206n45	89-90	456n11, 462n42
78,17-82,16	405n10	89,8-9	510n12
79	138n6, 463n49	89,15-20	542n22
79,1ff.	61n47	89,15-90,2	162n19
79,1-6	459n29	90	150n81, 258n18, 263n47, 458n18, 464
80-81	458n18	90,2	542n23
80-82	456n9	90,10-16	282n115
80,4	306n91	90,10-18	469n13
80,16-17	306n91	90,11-12	71n115
81	147n66, 459n28	90,11-14	460n30
83-88	456n10	90,11-16	163n24
83,7-84,1-7	466n2	90,12-16	284n120
83,14-18	510n11	90,12-91,4	543n26
85,10	481n72	90,18-91,4	543n25

In canticum canticorum (ed. H. Langerbeck,
GNO VI, Leiden 1960) (cont.)

90,19–91,4 206n46
 91 149n77
 92,8–16 461n38
 93 152n95, 464
 93,12–14 265n2
 93,13 267n18
 93,15 211n75
 94,12 62n67
 95–97 459n27
 95–99 493n56
 95,5 493n53
 95,11–12 493n54
 96 370n46
 96–97 457n12
 96,7–10 212n83
 96,7–13 543n31
 96,7–15 164n32
 97,9 74n137
 98 494n58
 98,5–12 277n91
 98,6–12 542n24
 98,8 164n30
 98,12 277n91
 99,6–7 489n23
 100–101 151n90, 457n14
 100,5–13 435n39
 100,16–19 509n9
 100,16–21 430n8
 101–104 457n17
 101,4–13 435n39
 101,20–102,3 205n36
 101,20–103,5 411n37
 101,20–106,4 266n8
 102 150n82
 102,1–3 71n17
 102,3–103,5 164n33
 103,15 f. 266n6
 103,15–16 400n46
 103,18–104,2 265n1, 281n108
 104 150n82, 279n102,
 471n22
 104 f. 279n102
 104,1 ff. 71n15
 104,2–4 163n25
 104,2–10 266n9, 280n107
 104,10–15 266n11
 105–106 370n43

105–107 458n20, 464
 105,8 306n91
 105,10–14 279n101
 105,11 ff. 62n62
 105,16–17 437n48, 437n50
 106 461n36
 106,18–107,4 403n2
 106,20–107,5 35n27
 106,20–107,1 205n36
 106,20–107,4 209n63
 107 325n88, 489n22
 107–108 371n47
 107–109 458n23
 107,1–5 481n74
 107,2 209n64
 107,4 489n22
 107,4–5 205n32, 216n96
 107,5–8 211n72
 107,9 ff. 206n47
 107,9–108,4 32n19
 107,9–108,7 210n68
 107,9–109,1 10, 21
 107,11–108,1 489n24
 108 134, 152n96, 371n47,
 490n27, 490n28
 108–109 490n28
 108,1–4 66n84
 108,3,6 f. 188n50
 108,7–10 211n76
 108,10–12 33n21
 108,10 ff. 205n28
 108,12–18 188n51
 109 144n42, 462n43
 109–112 459n24
 109,3 f. 188n52
 109,7 ff. 61n54
 110 462n41
 111 463n49
 111,7 60n46
 111,12 ff. 61n54
 112 148n72, 463n48
 112,8–12 544n38
 112,12–16 544n39
 113–115 459n25
 114 144n46
 114,3 ff. 61n55
 115 145n48, 152n97,
 463n50
 115–116 365n22, 367n33

115,1	167n42, 10	138,3–6	301n65
115,3	462n45	138,15–16	301n63
116	492n44	139,1–4	382n16
116–117	455n5, 493n50	139,4–10	382n18
116–120	460n32	140	144n43, 144n46
116–125	493n49	140,2–4	301n64
116,3 ff.	61n56	140–146	490n32
116,17–117,1	219n114	140,1	165n36
119	345n17, 493n52	140,2	301n61
119–120	460n34, 464	140,7	300n58
119,13	462n45	140,7–145,13	300n56
120–123	461n37	140,9–12	310n100
121,16–122,11	545n43	141,5–15	204n23, 207n50
122	152n96	142,9–14	308n94
123–127	461n39	141,10	209n61
123,1	529n11, 529n16	141,15 ff.	61n53
123,17–19	545n48	143,6 ff.	61n49
125	492n46	143,13	74n38
125,10 f.	541n18	144–145	340n2
125,15–17	540n9	144,19–145,13	308n94
125,17–20	212n81	145	138n6, 152n99,
127–129	365n19, 462n44		152n100, 340n2,
127,7–128,5	37n33		490n29
127,10–17	181n9	145,6 ff.	67n87
127,15	462n45	145,6–9	513n26
128	524n32	145,14–147,5	288n3, 300n57
129	143n40, 365n21,	146	150n85
	463n46, 464	146–154	299n53
	463n46, 464	146,4	303
129–135	267n20	146,4–147,5	303n72
129,2–10	206n48	146,5	302n67
129,5–7	38n34	146,8–9	303, 302n69
129,10–16	433n26	146,9–11	303
129,15–16	540n9	146,12–13	303
131,10	147n67	146,12–14	303
133	350n35	146,13–147,5	304n73
134	29n13	146,14–16	303
134,9–135,6	440n65	146,17–18	303
134,17–19–135,1–6	144n46, 451n36	147	340n1, 341n3, 342n6,
135	269n42		358n55, 479n63
135,2–6	447n14	147–148	343n7
135,9–13	425n24	147,2	303
137	300n60	147,5–148,6	300n59
137–138	301n61	147,5–148,20	300n59
137,4–6	300n55	147,6–14	270n44
137,4–140,7	265n2, 268n27	147,6–148,1	410n34
137,5	268n27	148	152n100, 343n7,
137,5 f.	301n62		351n56, 384n25
137,12–138,3	301n66	148–149	358n56
137,12–138,6			

In canticum canticorum (ed. H. Langerbeck,
GNO VI, Leiden 1960) (*cont.*)

148,20–149,2 267n17
149 343n8
149,6 541n19
150 ff. 60n40
150 60n40, 135, 144n42,
150n83
150–151 358n56
150,9–13 281n111
150,9–151,2 266n8
150,10–18 281n107
150,11–13 266n9
150,13 ff. 71n15
150,18–151,2 67n93
151,12–152,7 289n6
152,18–153,2 265n5
156 150n82, 438n53
156,14–20 41n49
156,17–20 70n108
157–158 147n61
157,5–160,10 11, 21
157,14–16 185n34
157,14–19 380n6
157,14–21 479n62, 479n63
157,14–158,15 66n82
157,14–159,11 404n4
157,16 41n51, 185n35
157,16–19 185n35
157,19–21 479n64
157,20 185n36
157,20–158,1 185n37
158 145n49, 147n61,
152n101
158–159 145n49
158,1–7 185n39
158,8–12 185n38
158,12–19 186n40, 381n9
158,14.16.17 186n41
158,16 469n14
158,19–21 541n18
158,19–159,4 186n42
158,19–159,11 41n52
160,1–6 270n45
160,2 f. 277n93
160,3 45n60
160,10–163,17 101n97
160,12–15 541n15
160,14–161,1 45n62

160,15–161,7 431n15
160,17–161,1 541n14
163,9 188n53
163,11–164,15 406n15
163,12 188n54
163,13 188n53
163,14 188n53
163,19 188n53
164–168 492n44, 493n53
164,5–12 188n55
164,6 209n60
164,16 f. 188n54
167 488n21
167,15–168,5 266n12
168,15–169,2 205n29
172–174 151n90
172,22–174,20 404n4
172,23–173,1 267n21
173–174 147n62
173,3–5 156n4, 186n43
173,5 ff. 64n72
173,7–11 186n44
173,11–174,1 186n45
174 315n19, 346n20,
346n21, 347n22
174,1–5 380n7
174,1–8 187n47
174,6–7 469n14
174,8–16 187n48
174,15 194n91
175–179 145n50
175,1–178,19 190n74
175,1–179,19 11, 36n31
175,17–22 161n18
176–177 370n45
176,11–14 190n75, 211n71
176,14 226n39
176,15–177,3 529n14
178,16–183,15 406n15
178,21 f. 190n76
179–180 147n61, 315n18
179,6–7 163n27, 440n61
179,6 f. 190n77
179,7–10 190n78
179,6–17 524n30
180 363n11
180,9 66n85
180,11–15 267n19
181 364n13

181–182	370n44	211–212	143n39
181,16–21	65n79	212–213	369n40
181,19–21	471n25, 481n73	214,21–216,2	267n17
181,19–182,1	379n1	215,7	306n91
182,1	205n37	215,8–16	545n40
182,10–183,5	30n14	216,17	306n91
183	364n14	218	144n46
183,2–5	65n79	218,17	62n62
183,5–15	36n29	218,17–219,1	278n99
183,16–184,2	156n4	219,12–14	544n39
183,23	173n7	219,20	306n91
185–186	150n79	220,4–15	513n28
186,6–12	165n36, 545n46	221,8	306n91
186,8f.	277n93	222,13 ff.	58n25
187,7–188,4	405n10	222,18–219,2	546n55
187,10	306n91	223–224	148n72
188,12–189,4	510n13	223,12	306n91
189,16–190,3	412n40	223,18	306n91
190–191	142n31	224,12	306n91
190,18–191,1	412n41	224,19	260n34
191,7–192,4	431n15	225,1–3	260n35
191,9–18	412n42	225,17	306n91
191,13–18	414n52	225,19–20	260n36
191,18–192,7	412n43	227,11–14	260n37
192	133, 369n38	230,5–8	546n53
192,4–5	414n52	230,11	61n57
192,5–7	266n13	230,17	544n37
192,7–12	412n44	232,12	306n91
192,11–12	414n52	233–235	62n68, 149n76
193	144n46	240,2–3	261n42
193–195	150n86	240,21–241,4	269n36
193–197	141n23	241	150n82
193,2–199,7	413n46	241,8	544n37
193,5–194,7	75n146	242,16	306n91
195,18–196,8	269n40	245	348n25
197,13–14	414n52	245,22–246,5	36n30
197,13–15	413n47	246	348n26
197,17–198,2	413n47, 111	246–247	349n33
198	368n37, 414n52	247	349n30
198–199	369n39	247,11	161n18
198,6 ff.	528n8, 529n13	247,11–13	161n18
205	354n47	247,14–18	270n45
205,12–16	259n30	248–249	346n18
206,12–14	543n31	249	152n103, 346n18,
206,12–207,7	544n35		352n40
207	143n40	249,11–251,20	410n33
207,7–9	163n27	249,13–14	256n7
209,18–19	260n41	249,13–250,7	211n82
210 ff.	152n101	249,16–18	543n29

In canticum canticorum (ed. H. Langerbeck,
GNO VI, Leiden 1960) (*cont.*)

249,21-250, 2	257n9	263,12	189n62
250	351n37	263,16	261n43
250,2-5	257n8	264,16-265,1	165n35, 543n32
250,10,13-15	257n15	268,7-10	510n14
250,18-251,7	411n37	268,16-272,21	405n10
251	355n48, 356n53	269-270	150n86
251,1-7	270n44	269,1	61n52
251,18-20	257n16	270,7-11	510n13
252-253	351n38	271	150n80
252,3-8	188n56	271,8	306n91
252,6	188n58	271,11 f.	267n20
252,10,17	188n57	271,11-12	70n11
253	152n103, 351n38,	271,11-14	162n20
	352n41	271,11-16	165n36
253,8-12	188n59	271,16-22	510n13, 545n47
253,15-254,4	32n18	272	147n60
253,16 f.	277n93	272,9	306n91
254	31n17, 152n104,	272,15-21	73n129
	352n42, 494n64	274,6	69n100
254,1-8	215n93	274,16	540n6
254,10	500n12	276	343n7
254,10-256,5	225n137	276,13	531n23
254,13-20	31n17	276,16-277,2	281n12
254,15	209n60	277,7-11	529n14
255-257	194n97	277,7 f.	544n33
255	500n13, 501n14,	277,11	13, 529n16
	502n21, 502n26	278	142n32, 144n46
255,12-17	404n5	279,9-13	189n63
256	502n22, 502n23	279,16	306n91
256,9-257,5	31n16	280	142n33, 145n51,
257,1-5	283n117	280-281	189n63, 256n3
257,13-258,16	269n41	280,7-12	145n51
257,15	181n6	280,10	189n63
258,1 ff.	66n83	282-283	256n3
258,2-6	180n1	283,18-285,16	147n68
258,7-20	181n7	284,4-16	13, 22
258,9,12,13	180n6	284,5 ff.	541n13
258,12	181n6	284,16-285,14	62n59
258,14	181n6	285,16-17	162n21, 542n23
258,18	181n6	286,1-2	62n60
259	143n36	286,2 ff.	62n61
259,6	266n15	287,6-8	541n11
259,6-260,10	266n15	287,8-288,3	411n37
261,3-4	513n28	288-289	150n86
262,1-12	189n60	289,15	306n91
262,20	189n61	289,17	306n91
263,1-266,3	13, 22	293,9-10	71n118
		293,10-14	204n22

294	144n46	324,10-11	69n101
298,1-21	411n37	324,10-12	382n19
298,16-19	541n12	324,12-14	178n16
303, 6-9	59n38	324,13-325,17	212n85
304,16-19	487n9	324,15-19	270n47
304,16-305,2	545n42	324,15-325,1	480n66
305,18-21	69n105	325,4-7	215n93
306,11-15	510n13	325,21	69n98, 178n17
308,5-11	69n106	325,21-326,3	178n17
308,5-309,14	411n35	325,26-326,5	379n1
308,12-18	268n32	326,2-4	480n67
308,14-311,7	70n109	327-329	139n8
309,5-9	472n32	327,8f.	189n64
309,6	70n110, 72n125	327,8-329,1	15, 212n85
310	140n17	327,14f.	266n14
310,14 ff.	66n83	328,1-10	260n39
310,18-311,2	546n56	328,1-329,14	263n64
311-314	104n18	328,2-10	204n25
311,8-313,16	269n33	328,12	263n63
311,8-313,24	70n109	329	371n22
313,1-16	430n11	329,15	260n40
313,17-19	517n2	330,17-20	258n17
313,17-314,7	519n8	331,3-10	258n18
313,17-314,10	430n12	331,16	480n66
313,24-314,7	523n25	332,8	205n33, 207n52
314,10	14, 513n28	332,16-18	480n66
315-317	140n19	332,20-333,11	42n53
318	153n106	333,13	166n40, 532n24
318,8-9	261n44	333,13-334,5	266n7
318,10-12	267n17	334-337	60n41
319	153n106, 153n113	334,3-9	383n21
319,5-322,12	14, 39n42	334,1f.	541n18
320,2-5	191n81	334,3	404n5
320,8-322,3	406n15	334,14-336,1	405n12
321	153n113	334,15-335,1	383n22
321-322	349n32	334,15-337,21	214n91
321,2f.	270n46	337,1-9	480n66
321,7-22	404n5	337,3-4	207n53
321,17	72n125, 72n128	337,7-9	468n5
322,3-323,9	191n79	337,15-21	159n13
322,6-324,12	406n16	338,2ff.	67n90
322,13-323,9	54n4	338,2-14	42n55, 213n86
323-324	145n52	338,15-339,4	204n24, 214n90
323,3-9	379n1	338,17-18	404n4
323,10-327,7	191n80	339	144n46
323,19-20	260n32	339,6-8	468n5
323,20-324,2	259n31	339,14-19	160n14
324	138n6, 156n2, 364n16	339,16-19	181n8
324-325	368n34	341	153n107

In canticum canticorum (ed. H. Langerbeck,
GNO VI, Leiden 1960) (cont.)

341-342	151n92, 365n24	362	503n30
342,7	107n124	362,8-9	449n21
342,9-346,2	410n33	362,9-14	40n44
342,9-343,1	439n59	362,12	268n32
343,8-10	257nn11	365,17-18	449n22
344	149n77	365,9-10	449n25
344,1-3	262n53	366	153nn13
344,13 ff.	58n24	366-367	145n53, 145n54
345	153nn107, 368n34	366,10	16, 59n33, 406n15,
345,9-11	262n57	366,10-368,3	445n5
345,11-346,8	269n34	366,10-368,4	406n15
345,19-346,2	166n39	366,2-3	445n5
347	144n42, 503n28,	366,11	449n24
	503n29	366,23-367,9	191n82
347-349	147n63	367	181n83
347,6	15, 23, 59n34	367,3-6	505n41
347,6-352,5	15, 23	368,6	445n8
347,13-15	262n52	368,7-8	16, 447nn13
348-350	79	368,7-14	446n11
348,1	72nn125, 265n4, 265n5	368,15	404n4
348,1f.	265n4	368,15-16	448n16
348,1-9	265n5	368,17-19	448n17
349,12	267n18	369	449n20
350,2-19	411n37	369,11-13	144n46
350,7-19	520n12	369,14-21	448n18
351	503n31	369,14-370,11	407n19
352,14-17	161n18	369,14-370,13	269n43
353	505n37	369,21	16, 23
353,2	541n14	369,22-370,3	446n9
353,11-357,2	406n15, 406n16	369,22-370,11	525n35
354,8-356,16	444n3	369,23-370,3	407n20
356	505n44	370,12	446nn10, 450n27
356,12-16	45n60	372-374	513n28
357,3-20	65n80, 166n37	374	143n39
357,4-6	468n5	376,3-377,20	138n6, 504n35
357,6-20	404n4	378,14-21	406n15
357,8-9	481n73	379	433n29
357,20-358,1-3	471n25	379,11-13	144n42
358, 2-3	380n5	380-381	383n20, 471n25
359	146n55	380-383	147n65
359,5-361,15	39n43	380,4-6	147n64, 194n97
359,5-362,17	16, 23	380,7-386,17	524n31
359,5-370,13	445n4	380,10-15	243n40
360-362	146n58	380,13-14	243n42
360,14-361,6	406n15	380,15-390,8	437n46
360,17-20	266n14	380,15-20	207n54
361,16-17	59n36	380,20-381,22	219nn10
		381	220nn17
			479n63, 495n67

381,7-8	244n48	391,5-12	204n27
381,10-17	243n43	391,11-12	250n83
381,16-382,6	243n44	391,11-14	249n69
381,20-22	204n27	392,5-6	178n18
381,21	226n138	393	144n46
381,22	245n51, 250n82	393,21-394,6	546n50
382-386	153n108	396,12-397,1	281nn10
382,1	245n53	398	153n109
382,2	245n52	398,7-17	57n21
382,3-4	245n54	400	144n43
382,3	245n55	400,1-7	69n102
383,3-6	546n52	401-402	148n74
383,6-14	406n15	403,2-8	262n58
383,9	268n30, 334n158	404,10-15	262n54
383,15-399,3	407n17	404,13-406,6	54
383,15-19	451n28	405,11-18	258n20
383,15-386,17	16, 23	406,24	306n91
383,18-19	209n60	407,12 ff.	57n22
384	502n20	409,12-410,15	74n139
384-385	498n1, 499n8	410,5-6	74n140
384,13-21	44n59	410,18	306n91
384,13-385,5	246n57	412,1-6	474n40
384,18-21	320n51	413,10	306n91
385	506n45, 506n47	413,18-414,2	411n37
385,4-7	261n45	415-418	139n13
385,22-386,9	246n59, 405n12	415-420	153n110
386	146n59, 500n9, 500n12, 506n46, 506n48	415,14	306n91
		417,6	541n19
		418,4-6	545n43
386,3	72n123	422	139n14
386,8-9	72n127	425,14-17	523n26
386,18-390,8	17, 81n14	426,1-4	510n13
387	156n2	426,9-429,11	216n98
387-389	225n135	426,9-429,15	18, 23, 43n57
387,3	72n128	427,1-428,8	205n30
387,13-389,17	81n17	427,2	488n19
388	366n27	427,9-429,5	249n71
388,19	67n92	427,13	487n9
388,22	67n91	427,15	249n73
390,1 ff.	405n10	427,16-17	249n75
390,4	261n46	427,18-21	249n75
390,10-393,11	248n63	427,21-22	250n80
390,11 ff.	74n141, 248n64, 248n65	427,21-428,2	250n76
		427,21-428,10	545n41
390,11-14	248n65	427,22	204n27
390,19	248n66	428,2-3	250n77
390,22-391,2	248n67	428,5-6	250n78
391	506n49	428,7	488n19
391,2	67n91	428,7-9	251n84

In canticum canticorum (ed. H. Langerbeck,
GNO VI, Leiden 1960) (*cont.*)

428,11-13	250n79
428,13-429,5	251n85
431	418n6, 418n7, 419n8
431-432	419n9
431-434	151n93
431,2	306n91
432-433	420n11
433,4	209n60
434	144n43, 153n111
436,2-16	216n94
436,6 ff.	204n26
436,3-437,8	492n47
436,9	211n75
436,10	490n31
436,11-16	205n30
436,17-437,2	491n38
437,3-4	492n44
437,3-5	492n44, 493n52
437,3-8	493n48
437,9	306n91
437,12 f.	543n30
438,4-12	544n34
438,5-6	205n29
438,10-11	543n28
439	153n111, 336n176
439,2-440,10	266n8
439,3-11	544n36
439,3-20	205n36
439,3-442,9	18, 45n63
439,4-20	404n4
439,9-441,4	71n19
439,17-20	265n4
439,18-19	317n27
439,19-20	70n114
440	150n84
440,1-10	266n9, 282n113
440,4-7	266n11
440,7-8	163n25
440,7 f.	266n10, 284n124
441,3-4	205n34
441,18-442,9	405n10
441,20-442,2	543n28
442,10-446,10	45n64
443	149n77, 153n111
444,11-445,3	283n119
444,14-445,3	405n10
445,6	306n91

446-447	143n38
446,14-447,2	408n23
447-448	479n63
447,13-448,2	70n113
447,13-448,16	408n24
448,13-14	410n30
449,1-3	410n31
450,15	306n91
451-454	153n112
453,7	306n91
454,9	544n37
457	144n46, 425n22
457,3 ff.	75n147
457,19-460,2	252n87
457,21-458,1	317n28
458,16	252n90
458,20-21	252n88
459,4-7	535n37
459,17	252n89
462-463	141n27
464-465	141n28
465-466	141n26
466-467	319n43, 365n25
466,5-469,9	19, 546n57
467	371n48
467,2-17	43n56, 204n20,
	320n52
467,6 ff.	68n95
468-469	369n40
469,6	196n98

In diem natalem (ed. F. Mann, GNO x/1, Lei-
den 1996, 233-269)

236	495n67
-----	--------

In Ecclesiasten (ed. P. Alexander, GNO v, Lei-
den 1962, 195-442)

313-314	522n21
313,15-314,3	522n23
313,8-314,2	523n27
173,18-21	393n17
284,12-285,12	405n12
295,6-16	405n10
304-305	488n15
305,10-13	330n122
306,3-9	369n9
308,17-19	477n51
324,3-326,18	405n10
331,14-16	298n48
331,22	298n49
332,4-17	298n50

332,14-17	299n51
333,17-20	299n52
336	337n182
380,3-6	165n34
380,3-5	285n128
383-384	62n66
406,7-10	468n5
411,4-414,13	473n35
411,14-16	474n39
412,6-14	501n17
412,14	381n10
415,13-22	478n58
415,17-20	468n5
415,16-416,1	479n63
<i>In illud: Tunc et ipse filius</i> (ed. J.K. Dowling, GNO III/2, Leiden 1987, 1-28)	
13,22-14,7	331n127
13-14	335n163
14	328n110
17	328n112
21	328n109
<i>In inscriptiones Psalmorum</i> (ed. J.A. McDonough, GNO V, Leiden 1962, 1-175)	
26,19-29	406n14
28,25	518n3
30,15	518n3
31,17-33,6	405n12
40,20-21	157n7
40,20	157n7
40,21-22	157n7
41,15	157n7
52,24-25	522n22
65-69	335n164
76,1	157n7
100,25	329n115
101,3	329n115
101,18-21	329n116
106	494n66
<i>In sanctum et salutare Pascha (vulgo In Christi resurrectionem oratio IV)</i> (ed. E. Gebhardt, GNO IX, Leiden 1967, 309-311)	
309,21-310,4	512n24
<i>In sanctum Stephanum I</i> (ed. O. Lendle, GNO X/1, Leiden 1990, 75-94)	
70,24-25	452n31
91	476n48
<i>In sanctum Stephanum II</i> (ed. O. Lendle, GNO X/1, Leiden 1990, 97-105)	
103,19-23	471n23

<i>Oratio catechetica</i> (ed. E. Mühlenberg, GNO III/4, Leiden 1996)	
8	504n32
13,10-14	502n26
16,79-86	503n27
17,4-18,1-16	476n48
17,5-6,26	479n63
20	502n25
20,1-3	501n19
20,20-22	167n43
21	502n24
25,10 ff.	322n57
28,10	167n42
31-34	318n31
32,7-23	548n60
35	505n43
35,23-25	167n41
37,16-17	513n28
40,4	160n15
64-67	321n56, 322n60
72,16-17	513n28
84	217n105
85,10-87,17	468n7
91	221n118
105,10-106,18	548n60
<i>Oratio consolatoria in Pulcheriam</i> (ed. A. Spira, GNO IX, Leiden 1967, 461-472)	
465,9-26	405n10
<i>Refutatio confessionis Eunomii</i> (ed. W. Jaeger, GNO II, Leiden 1960, 312-410)	
165-366	64n73
385-386	488n16
396-397	329n114
<i>Vita Macrinae</i> (ed. V. Woods Callahan, GNO VIII/1, Leiden 1952, 370-414)	
371	265n3
375	438n53
379	265n3
379-380	434n35
380	440n63
381	265n3
383	441n66
384-386	435n36
386	435n38
390	435n36
395	429n1
395-396	436n44
396	432n21, 436n41, 436n45, 437n47

Vita Macrinae (ed. V. Woods Callahan,
GNO VIII/1, Leiden 1952, 370–414) (*cont.*)

397	439n57
397–398	438n56
398	439n58
402,14–403,2	405n10
406	438n54

Guillelmus de Sancto Theodorico

Excerpta de libris beati Ambrosii super Can-
ticum Canticorum 157

Hermeias

In Phaidr.
171,8,25 475

Hermogenes

De ideis
221,16–23 512

Hippolytus Romanus

Benedictiones Isaac et Iacob
27,82 493
In canticum canticorum 65, 76, 78, 114

Hilarius

In Matthaeum
18,6 487

Homerus

Hymni Homerici
2,6–8 291
2,32–33 291
19,6–14 291
19,20 291
19,25–26 291

Ilias

13,26–29 292

Odyssea

I 48–87 492
VII 115 298
VII 132 292

Horatius

Odes
II 15 293
Satires
II 6,70–76 293

Iamblichus

De vita Pythagorica 434
Protrepticus
116,21 477

Irenaeus

Adversus haereses
I 8,3 238
III 19,3 487
V 10,1 240

Evagrius Ponticus

Kephalaia Gnostika
I 1 333
I 40 332

Libanius

Orationes
22,17 511

(Ps-)Longinus

Peri Hypsous 304, 310

Lucretius

De Rerum Natura
I 931–950 304
IV 8–25 304

Macarius Aegyptius

Sermones
9,12 511
10,4 511
30,3–4 131

Maximus Tyrius

Dissertationes
30, 4 521

Matthæus Cantacuzenus

In Canticum Canticorum Salomonis Expositio
96

Origenes

Commentarius in Canticum
prol. 2,3 324
prol. 2,16 338, 414
prol. 2,16–19 269
prol. 2,17 335
prol. 2,20 334
prol. 2,22–23 334

prol. 2,25	334	VIII 11	240
prol. 2,33	334	IX 41,8	323
prol. 2,36	338	<i>Commentarius in evangelium Matthaei</i>	
prol. 2,43	335	X 3	318
prol. 3,1-16	267	<i>Commentarius in Ioannem</i>	
prol. 3,1-23	156	<i>In Jn 1,4</i>	500
prol. 3,6-7	540	I 16	324
prol. 3,23	335	I 16,92	324
prol. 4,20	324	I 19 (III)	242
I 4,9	336	I 32	323
I 4,19	269	II 13	332
I 6,8	335	II 13,96	326
II 1,3-7	143	II 31,187-188	335
II 2,21	336	VI 57,37	323
II 5,3	392	XXII 27,338	333
II 5,5	391	XXXII 26-39	323
II 5,29	391	<i>Contra Celsum</i>	
II 5,36	391	I, 48	269
II 5,39	391	IV, 4	134
II 7,8	61	VI, 36	504
II 8,11-20	206	VII, 34	269
II 9	542	<i>De oratione</i>	
II 9,12-14	269	19,3	322
II 10,3	211	27,16	332
III 1,4 ff.	67	<i>De Principiis</i>	
III 6,9	324	I 1,6	337
III 7,27	335	I 1,9	269
III 8,10	318	I 6,1	323
III 9,8	324	I 8,3	318
III 10,7-9	269	II 1,2	318, 322
III 13,36	318	II 6,3	223
III 77	332	II 6,5	335
IV 1,13	326	II 9,2	327
IV 2,17	318	II 9,7	335
IV 3	69	II 10,3	332
IV 63	327	II 10,6	331
V 22	326	II 11,7	318
VII 17	327	III 5,5	318
VIII 72	323, 327	III 5,7	323
<i>Commentarius in Epistolam ad Romanos</i>		III 5,8	318 f.
I 17,2	498	III 6,1	316
II 13,27	322	III 6,2-3	327 f.
III 1,7	504	III 6,5	322, 326
IV 7,3	322	<i>Expositio in Proverbia</i>	
IV 7,41-43	322	5	332
IV 10	322	<i>Homiliae in Cant</i>	
IV 11,73-75	322	I 9	391
V 10,195-226	317, 335	<i>Homiliae in Exodum</i>	
V 10,227-230	334	5,5	263

Homiliae in Ezechielem

1,12	335
9,1	318

Homiliae in Ieremiam

1,15	331
1,15–16	503
5,2	335
9,1	164
14,18	316
16,6	331

Homilia in Iud

1,3	326
-----	-----

Homiliae in Jes

8,5	327
-----	-----

Homilia in Leviticum

VI 2	266
------	-----

Homiliae in Lucam

22	164
30	323

Homilia in Numeros

11, 4	241
-------	-----

Homilia in 1 Psalm

37,4	318
------	-----

Homilia in 3 Psalm

36,1	327
------	-----

Selecta in Psamos

56	327
144	332

Palladius*Dialogus de vita sancti Joannis Chrysostomi*

16–17	312
-------	-----

Historia Lausiaca

23	312
86	312

Philo Alexandrinus*De cherubim*

56	475
----	-----

De fuga et inventione

167, 1	40
--------	----

De Mutatione Nominum

419

De Opificio mundi

6–39	475
150	475

De specialibus legibus

I 132–133	236
-----------	-----

De ebrietate

148	269
-----	-----

Legum allegoriarum

I, 84, 3	40
II 15	475

Quaestiones in Genesim

I 53	266
------	-----

Photios*Amphilochia*

119	386
180	386, 387
181	386
182	387
189	387

Bibliotheca

232	314
291b	314

Homiliae

18	122
----	-----

Plato*Alcibiades I*

127e–131a	281
132d–133c	272
133c13–14	273

Charmides

165c–175d	273
-----------	-----

Gorgias

462b–466a	294
-----------	-----

Phaedo

60b–c	521
79a–80b	410
79c ff.	267
81a–d	410
85b	51
99d4–e4	282
102b	522

Phaedrus

229a–b, 242b	295
230b–c	295
238c	270
242a–257b	409
244a–245c	411
245a–245c	295
245c5	271
245c–246a	410
246b–248b	273
246c	143, 409

246c-e	410	611e	410
246e-248b	409	<i>Symposium</i>	
248a-b	410	185b7-c1	269
248c-e	409	201a	270
249d-250a	411	203b-d	424
249d-251a	409	203c	270
249e	270	203d	414
250b-d	271	203e3-4	271
251a-b	410	204b	270
252a	270	206e	270
254b	270	207d5-208a3	271
255c-d	272	209e-210e	405
255d5-6	272	210a-211c	270
255d8-e1	272	210e-211e	405
257a-b	295	211a	403
269a-e	295	211a-e	404
269d	295	211b-c	404
271d-272b	295, 296	211d-e	405
275c-276a	296	211d-212b	414
276b	296	215a-222b	271
276c-277b	296	<i>Theaetetus</i>	
<i>Phaedo</i>		174a-b	269
60b-c	521	<i>Timaeus</i>	
65c-67d	430	33b7	273
99d4-e4	282	37d5-7	271
<i>Philebus</i>		38a7-8	271
31b-52c	521	38b8-c3	271
51c	521	45b-d	279
<i>Protagoras</i>		46a-c	279
337c	519	47a-c	273
<i>Respublica</i>		80b	519
363d	41	90a	410
368c7-369a3	283		
402b5-6	273	Plotinus	
435c	413	<i>Enneades</i>	
439d ff.	413	I 1 (53), 8, 17 f.	275
440e	414	I 2 (19), 3, 10-22	267
442a-b	413	I 2 (19), 3, 20	268
442b	414	I 2 (19), 4, 12-16	284
442b-c	414	I 2 (19), 5, 7	268
444b	413	I 2 (19), 6, 25 f.	268
445c6	327	I 4 (46), 10, 6-16	274
478c-479d	522	I 5, 1-21	267
485b-487a	267	I 6, 5	511
500c	162	I 6 (1), 6, 6-16	267
509e1-510a3	273	I 6 (1), 9, 7-15	285
516a6-b7	282	I 8, 9	333
590a-b	414	II 9 (33), 2, 5-10	266
596d8-e3	273	III 2 (47), 8, 9-11	266

Enneades (cont.)

III 4,36–38	266
III 6 (26),7,23–26	274
III 6 (26),9,16–19	274
III 6 (26),13,38–40	274
III 6 (26),14,1–4	274
III 8, 11–19–23	385
VI 2 (43),22,33–35	275
IV 3 (27),11,6–11	275
IV 3 (27),12,1–2	272
IV 3(27),12,1–4	275
IV 3 (27),30,9 f.	274
IV 5 (29),2,12 f.	280
IV 5 (29),7,44–51	275
IV 8 (6),4	284
V 1	470
V 1 (10),1,11–25	284
V 1(10),3,7	276
V 1(10),7,1	276
V 1 (10),12,12–15	284
V 3 (49),8,53 f.	274
V 3 (49),15,1–3	276
V 3 (49),15,31–35	276
V 4 (7),1,36	276
V 4 (7),2,38	276
V 5, 5, 10–11	385
V 5, 5, 13–14	385
VI 4 (22),10,5–17	276
VI 7(38),6–7	269
VI 7 (38),15,19 f.	276
VI 7 (38),17,3–18	276
VI 7 (38), 32,26–29	271, 284
VI 7 (38),32,29	284
VI 7 (38),33,37 f.	284
VI 7 (38),34,6–16	270, 285
VI 8,13	209
VI 9 (9),6,54–57	276
VI 9 (9),7,14–18	284

Plutarchus*De Communibus Notitiis adversus Stoicos*

37	514
----	-----

De esu carnium

996c	272
------	-----

De Iside

77, 382d	267
----------	-----

Placita Philosophorum

IV 13, 901a8	280
IV 13, 901a8–b5	280

IV 14, 901c10–13	280
------------------	-----

Quaestiones convivales

696a6	281
-------	-----

Porphyrus*Ad Marcellam*

13,1–12	277
13,11 f.	277

De abstinentia

I 30–31	285
---------	-----

Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes

30,11–19	285
----------	-----

Proclus*In Timaeum*

163e–164a	273
-----------	-----

Theologia platonica

II 8	385
------	-----

Seneca*Naturales quaestiones*

I 17,4	272
--------	-----

Sextus Empiricus*Adversus mathematicos*

VII 140	477
VIII 245	477
VIII 374	477

Pyrrhoniae hypotyposis

II 104	477
II 142	477
II 169–170	477
II 179	477

Socrates*Historia ecclesiastica*

VI 7–9	312
--------	-----

Sozomenus*Historia ecclesiastica*

VIII,6	127
VIII 11–13	312

Stobaeus

III 21,24	273
-----------	-----

Odae Salomoni

13,1	273
------	-----

Themistius

Oration

20 294

Theophrastus

De sensu

52–53 279

Thomas Aquinas

In II Sententiarum

d. 11, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4 163

Index nominum

- Adelphius 126, 297–299
Adonis 296
Aeneas Gazaeus 396n27, 401
Akindynos, G. 90, 98
Aland, B. 238n16, 255
Alcibiades 271f., 272n66, 273n67, 278–279, 281n12, 282, 283n18, 285, 414n53, 427
Alcinous 292, 292n22, 294, 297–298
Alexakis, A. 103n103, 111
Alexander Aphrodisiensis 279n102, 280, 280n105
Alexander, P. 97n80, 111
Alexandria 157, 167, 236n12, 238n17, 239n20, 247, 255, 283n18, 341, 411n35, 473n34, 475n43, 482, 485n3, 493n55, 498n2, 519, 522n20
Alexopoulos, T. 331n33, 338, 381n10, 386n38, 388
Altenburger, M. 193n87, 199, 235n8, 255, 381n10, 389
Ambrogio Traversari 78, 78n5, 104, 104n107, 104n109, 114, 116–118, 395, 395n22, 396, 396n24, 402
Ambrosiaster 237n14
Ambrosius 60n43, 127, 156–157, 158n9, 485n2, 496
Anagnostès, M. 86
Andersen, O. 288n1, 310
Anderson, J.C. 98n83, 111
Annas, J. 476n50, 482
Annesi 440
Aphrodite 291f., 301, 423f.
Apollinarius 50, 66, 200–202, 222, 488n16, 513f., 515n35
Aquila 142
Arendt, H. 416n3, 427
Areveltsi, V. 101, 101n96, 116
Aristoteles 60, 61n48, 158, 161, 163, 278, 278n100, 279n102, 304n77, 310, 405n9, 415, 475f., 480n65, 486n4, 509n3, 524n29, 541n13, 541n14
Arius 201
Armstrong, A.H. 209n65, 229, 270n48
Arrigoni, G. 438n53, 443
Ashley, T.R. 236n11, 255
Astell, A. 313n11, 338
Athanasius 89n48, 200n1, 208n56, 232, 234, 247, 247n60, 254, 314, 341f., 342n4, 342n5, 353, 397, 485n3, 498, 498n
Aubert, H. 106n18, 111
Aubineau, M. 62n65, 75, 201n6, 229, 289n4, 310
Aubry, G. 276n88, 285
Auer, J. 223n126, 229
Augustinus 163, 244, 351, 390, 392n9, 395, 396n26, 401, 551, 551n1
Auwers, J.-M. 78n2, 90, 90n51, 91, 91n53, 92n59, 93, 111
Ayres, L. 65n78, 75, 192n86, 197, 374, 470n18, 482
Babilonia 57
Backus, I.D. 401
Baehrens, W. 61n48, 78n2, 111, 143n41, 206, 229, 269n38
Balás, D.L. 187n47, 197, 209n66, 219, 219n13, 229, 468n6, 468n8, 470n18, 482
Balbi, P. 397
Balthasar, H.U. von 411n36, 415, 425n21, 427
Baltrušaitis, J. 272n58, 285
Bammel, C.P. 268n26, 287
Bar Hebraeus 100
Barbàra, M.A. 78n2, 111
Barnes, M.R. 470n18, 482
Barrier, J.W. 55n9, 76
Barth, K. 233, 499n7, 507
Basilius Caesariensis 55f., 58n26, 82, 127, 127n22, 136, 192, 192n84, 197f., 259n24, 304n74, 312, 367, 367n31, 383, 383n24, 384, 392, 392n10, 394f., 405, 426, 434, 452n31, 474n37, 475f., 476n46, 477n52, 520n11, 521n13, 526f., 527n1, 527n2, 537f.
Bastitta Harriet, F. 392n9, 397n33, 400n46, 401
Batllo, X. 47n71, 51, 380n7, 388
Bauckham, R. 322n59, 339
Baumstark, A. 100n90, 111
Bedke, A. 476n49, 482
Behr, J. 203n15, 205n38, 229, 340*, 361n4, 374

- Beierwaltes, W. 411n36, 415
 Beit, H. von 486n5, 496
 Bélanger, R. 103n104, 111
 Belda Plans, M. 48n74, 51
 Bennett, C.E. 293n26, 311
 Berghaus, M. 101n98, 102n102, 113, 117,
 193n86, 198, 313n10, 339, 361n4, 361n6,
 372n49, 374 f., 381n8
 Bernard, C.A. 432n19, 441
 Bernardi, J. 56, 56n16, 58, 58n27, 75
 Bernardus Claravallensis 103, 297
 Bessarion 397
 Bethel 11, 74, 74n138
 Bianconi, D. 89n46, 111
 Bienert, W.A. 79n6, 116
 Bingham, J. 239, 240n23, 255
 Bjerre-Aspegren, K. 187n49, 197, 277n90,
 283n118, 285, 485n1, 496
 Blowers, P.M. 348n24, 359
 Bodenmann, R. 106n118, 111
 Bodkin, M. 486n5, 496
 Boersma, H. 35n26, 51, 350n34, 359, 540n5,
 548
 Bogaczyk-Vormayr, M. 244n47, 255
 Böhm, T. 192n86, 194n89, 194n94, 197,
 407n21, 415, 415n54
 Boissonade, J.F. 396n27, 401
 Bonato, V. 430n6, 431n17, 433n29, 441
 Bonaventura de Balneoregio 163n25
 Bonaventura Vulcanius 105, 105n16,
 105n118, 106, 106n118, 106n119, 112, 115,
 118
 Borresen, K.E. 434n35, 443
 Bossina, L. 91, 91n54, 92n58, 95, 95n69,
 95n72, 111
 Bouchet, J.-R. 200n1, 203n16, 207, 207n55,
 208n57, 217, 217n101, 219n112, 221n121,
 229, 508n2, 509n8, 515
 Boud'hors, A. 77*, 100n92
 Boys-Stones, G.R. 486n4, 496
 Bray, G. 237n14, 255
 Bremmer, J.N. 55n9, 76
 Brent, A. 314n12, 339
 Brightman, R.S. 195n95, 195n96, 197
 Brisson, L. 268n23, 271n53, 285, 285n125
 Brochard, V. 474n42, 482
 Brown-Witcher, H. 106n120, 107n123, 111,
 396n29, 397n31, 401
 Brown, P. 452n30, 453
 Brox, N. 160n14, 168
 Brugarolas, M. 33n20, 34n24, 51, 63n71,
 76, 187n46, 198, 200, 203n16, 204n20,
 205n36, 212n80, 229, 362n7, 380n7,
 389
 Buber, M. 390, 390n2, 401
 Buffière, F. 492n46, 496
 Bultmann, R. 233
 Buondelmonti, C. 86, 104
 Burgundio a Pisa 394
 Burns, S. 40n45, 51
 Buzzzi, P. 100n92, 116
 Byzantium 79n6, 91n52, 97n77, 98n84, 112,
 114
 Cadenhead, R.A. 368, 368n36, 374
 Caesar Augustus 305
 Caesarea 56, 126, 259n24, 273n67, 392,
 392n10, 474n37, 476n46, 477n52,
 521n13, 526, 527n2, 538
 Cahill, J.B. 4, 4n4, 51, 51n79, 54, 54n6, 73,
 73n130, 75, 138n7, 153, 192n86, 197,
 391n3, 401, 539n1, 539n2, 548
 Calabi, F. 473n34, 475n43, 482
 Calori Cesis, F. 397n34, 401
 Calypso 292 f.
 Campbell, J. 487n7, 496
 Camplani, A. 100n92, 116
 Canart, P. 85n32, 112
 Canévet, M. 47, 47n69, 51, 63n69, 75, 78n6,
 79, 79n9, 112, 172n3, 173n5, 179, 181n10,
 182n16, 184n26, 186n40, 192n86, 193n88,
 197, 202n10, 202n11, 205n39, 206n40,
 206n46, 206n47, 207, 207n49, 207n51,
 209n62, 212n79, 212n84, 219n110,
 219n111, 227n142, 229 f., 432n19, 432n22,
 437n47, 441, 446n12, 450n26, 453
 Cantacuzène, M. 96
 Capboscq, A. 266n8, 285
 Capone, A. 437n47, 441
 Cappuyens, M. 395n20, 401
 Carabine, D. 195n95, 197
 Carmichael, D. 398n39, 399n41, 402
 Cassin, M. 81n15, 82n18, 85n32, 86n33, 112,
 200n2, 232, 247n62, 255, 289n4, 310,
 314n15, 316n20, 339, 362n6, 380n7,
 388, 390*, 437n47, 441, 468n6, 479n59,
 481n71
 Cassiodorus 156, 394

- Cataldo, A. 435n37, 441
 Cavadini, C.R. 313n11, 338
 Cazes, H. 105n116, 105n118, 106n119, 112, 115
 Ceresa-Gastaldo, A. 95n68, 112
 Ceulemans, R. 91, 91n52, 91n53, 91n54, 92, 92n57, 92n58, 99n88, 112
 Chadwick, H. 129, 130n27, 135
 Chalcedon 208n56, 222n126, 230, 371n47, 373, 509
 Chalkeopoulos, A. 397
 Chalkoutzès 85
 Cherniss, H.F. 413n47, 415, 415n54, 423
 Chevalier, J. 486n5, 492n45, 496
 Choniates, J. 105n114
 Choniates, N. 105n114
 Christensen, M.J. 469n15, 483, 491n35, 496
 Chrysoloras, M. 395
 Ciccolini, L. 104n108, 117
 Circe 292
 Clemens Alexandrinus 157, 167, 238n17, 239n20, 341 f., 342n5, 353, 411n35, 493n55, 498n2, 519, 519n7, 522n20
 Coakley, S. 38n34, 63n69, 65n768, 75 f., 181n9, 192n86, 194n88, 195n96, 197 f., 200, 203n14, 208, 208n59, 210n70, 211 f., 230, 308, 308n93, 310, 360, 360n1, 360n2, 370n42, 374, 422, 426 f., 426n26, 508n2, 509n4, 514n34, 515 f., 515n36, 522n24, 526
 Cohen, D. 336n177, 338
 Cohn, L. 40n46, 51
 Collins, R. 502n24, 507
 Conley, Th.M. 106n119, 112
 Constantinopolis 4, 29, 54, 85 f., 89n47, 113, 122, 122n10, 124, 126–130, 128n23, 129n26, 136, 201n3, 312, 396, 452, 539n2
 Constantinos IX Monomachos 95
 Constantinus 332
 Cornford, F.M. 279n104, 286
 Corssen, P. 277n89, 277n92, 286
 Cortesi, A. 4n5, 51, 56n17, 75, 80n12, 112, 210n70, 230, 440n62, 441, 454, 454n2, 455n6, 457n13, 459n26, 460n31, 460n33, 461n38, 464, 534n33, 537
 Cortesi, M. 104n109, 104n110, 114
 Courcelle, P. 391n5, 401
 Cranz, F.E. 106n120, 111, 396n29, 397n31, 401
 Crawford, N. 543n25, 548
 Cross, F.L. 539n1, 548
 Cross, R.A. 256n1, 264
 Crouzel, H. 223n127, 230
 Crusius, M. 88n43, 89
 Cummings, J.T. 438n56, 441
 Curzel, C. 40n47, 52, 228n145, 230
 Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus 73, 73n131
 D'Aiuto, F. 87n39, 113
 D'Amico, C. 390*, 397n33, 401
 D'Ancona Costa 276n87, 286
 Dahan, G. 79n10, 116
 Daley, B. 172n2, 179, 200n2, 218, 218n106, 230, 509n4, 514n34, 515n35, 516
 Damascius 478n55
 Damasus 142n34
 Daniélou, J. 4, 4n5, 4n6, 35n28, 36, 36n32, 40n48, 42n54, 46n65, 47 f., 52, 54, 54n5, 69, 69n103, 75, 120, 120n5, 127, 127n19, 134 f., 134n36, 141n25, 153, 166n40, 168, 185n39, 193n88, 194n91, 197 f., 201n8, 201n9, 203n16, 210n68, 216, 216n95, 217n104, 217n105, 230, 266n8, 266n14, 269n38, 286, 340*, 357n54, 360n2, 363n9, 364, 369 f., 369n41, 374, 391n3, 401, 407n21, 411n36, 413n47, 415, 415n54, 423, 429n5, 430n9, 430n13, 431, 432n20, 432n23, 437n50, 442, 448n18, 453 f., 464, 468, 468n8, 483, 531n22, 537, 539, 539n1, 548, 553, 553n3
 Darmarios, A. 92n58, 105, 105n114, 105n117, 106
 Dassmann, E. 485n2, 496
 De Blasi, A. 92n58, 111
 De Gregorio, G. 88n44, 89n47, 113
 Déchanet, J.-M. 103n105, 113, 399n42, 401
 Decock, P.B. 333n152, 338
 Delphi 399
 Demetrius 304–306, 304n77, 305n78, 305n80, 310
 Demiéville, P. 272n58, 286
 Democritus 279n102
 Demoen, K. 97n78, 115
 Demosthenes 305, 305n85, 305n86, 305n87, 511, 511n22, 516
 Derrida, J. 271n53, 285, 536n38
 Desalvo, C. 175n13, 179
 Devreesse, R. 85, 85n31, 87n38, 113

- Di Pierro, C. 398n36, 401
 Didymus 94n67
 Diehl, E. 273n72
 Diller, A. 397n34, 401
 Dilthey, W. 163, 163n38, 168
 Diodorus Tarsensis 73, 137 f., 237n14
 Diogenes Laertios 268n23, 280n106, 473, 477n54
 Dionysius Exiguus 394, 397n35, 399
 Dionysius Halicarnassensis 305 f.
 Dionysus 272, 272n60, 274n73, 275, 286
 Diotima 270 f., 270n49, 404, 423, 427
 Dolidze, T. 79n6, 101n98, 113
 Dorner, I.A. 235, 235n10, 255
 Dörrie, H. 193n87, 199, 203n16, 227n143, 230, 232, 235n8, 255, 381n10, 389
 Dörries, H. 53n1, 75, 120n4, 121, 121n7, 123, 123n11, 130n29, 131n30, 133, 135 f., 227n143, 230
 Douglass, S. 361n6, 416n1, 427, 469n8, 483, 501n16, 507, 536n38, 537
 Doutreleau, L. 527n1, 538
 Drecoll, V.H. 101n98, 102n102, 113, 117, 180, 192n84, 193n86, 313n10, 339, 361n4, 361n5, 361n6, 362n7, 363n8, 372n49, 374 f., 380n8
 Drobner, H. 68n97, 76, 186n43, 187n49, 198, 204n18, 210n69, 231, 407n18, 415, 426n25, 428, 468n8, 483, 518n3, 526
 Dufour, A. 106n118, 111
 Dumitrascu, N. 204n20, 229
 Dunn, J.D.G. 498n2, 507
 Dünzl, F. 46n68, 51n79, 52 f., 53n1, 53n3, 54n4, 54n6, 57n19, 58n32, 59n35, 60, 60n44, 60n45, 63n69, 67n94, 69n101, 73, 73n134, 73n135, 74n141, 74n145, 75 f., 78n6, 79, 79n8, 80n12, 83n23, 113, 132n33, 133, 136, 151n87, 153, 165n33, 168, 181n8, 182n14, 184n33, 187n49, 192n86, 193n88, 194n94, 198, 202, 202n12, 205n39, 230, 279n102, 379n1, 380n3, 380n4, 381n9, 382n11, 382n18, 383n21, 383n22, 388 f., 391n3, 391n5, 401, 407n16, 415, 444n2, 445n6, 446n12, 448n15, 449n26, 453, 455n5, 459n24, 460n32, 463n51, 465, 539n2, 540n8, 545n43, 546n51, 546n54, 548
 Dupont, J. 277n92, 286
 Durand, G.M. de 527n1, 538
 Eckhart, Meister 156
 Eisenberger, H. 72n122, 76, 205n31, 230
 Eliade, M. 486n5, 496
 Elliot, M.W. 500m10, 506n48, 507
 Elm, S. 434n35, 442
 Emmelia 434
 Emmenegger, G. 267n17, 286
 Empedocles 280
 Ephesus 123 f.
 Epiphanius Salaminensis 89, 123
 Erasmus Roterodamus 119
 Esbroeck, M. van 101n97, 113
 Eugenius IV 396
 Eunomius 47n71, 50, 185n38, 185n38, 192n86, 194n94, 196, 200–202, 202n13, 219, 222n125, 224, 232, 309, 407, 470n18, 482, 501
 Eusebius Caesariensis 85n32, 86, 273n67, 112, 332
 Eustathius Antiochenus 137
 Evagrius Ponticus 312, 326, 332, 332n143, 332n144, 333, 337, 339
 Fabiny, T. 486n5, 496
 Faulhaber, M. 91, 91n52, 113
 Ferguson, E. 38n40, 194n92, 198, 256, 256n1, 256n6, 257n9, 257n12, 258n22, 261n46, 261n51, 263n62, 264, 358n56
 Filippi, S. 392n9, 401
 Finan, T. 195n95, 197
 Firmicus Maternus 272n59
 Fitschen, K. 123n11, 124n12, 124n13, 126n15, 126n17, 134n34, 134n35, 136
 Flavianus Antiochienus 126
 Fonkic, B. 89n46, 113
 Fontaine, J. 193n88, 197
 Fortuna, S. 273n67, 277n89, 283n118, 286
 Foucault, M. 417n5, 453
 Fowler, H.N. 295n35, 295n36, 295n37, 296n41, 296n42, 311
 Fox, K. 290, 290n9, 310
 Francisco de Mendoza 106
 Frank, K.S. 436n43, 442
 Friedell, E. 474n38, 483
 Fronton du Duc 107

- Frye, N. 486n5, 496
 Fürst, A. 162n23, 168
- Gaca K.L. 240n23, 255, 498n2, 507
 Gaith, J. 168, 257n12, 264, 449n26, 453, 165n34
 Galenus 175
 Gamillscheg, E. 77*, 105n114, 105n117, 113
 Garel, G.F. 433n27, 442
 Gargano, G.I. 25n10, 52, 429n2, 442, 540n8, 548
 Garin, E. 395n21, 397n34, 398n39, 399n40, 399n41, 399n43, 399n44, 400n45, 401
 Garitte, G. 65n77, 76, 78n1, 114
 Garry, J. 486n5, 496
 Gavriljuk, P.L. 360n2, 370n42, 374, 522n25, 526
 Geerdard, M. 77*, 114
 Géhin, P. 86n35, 99n87, 114 f.
 Geljon, A. 332n133, 338
 Gentile, S. 104n109, 104n111, 114
 Georgius Athonita 101
 Georgius Trapezuntius 396, 397n35
 Gerlach, S. 88 f., 89n47, 89n48
 Gerontius Nicomediensis 127
 Gersh, S. 512n24, 516
 Gheerbrant, A. 486n5, 492n45, 496
 Giannarelli, E. 429n1, 429n3, 434n34, 434n35, 435n38, 436n43, 436n45, 437n47, 439n56, 439n58, 440n63, 441n66, 442
 Gibson, C.A. 511n22, 516
 Gonnet, D. 99n86, 118
 Gordillo, M. 214n88, 230
 Gordon, B.D. 236n12, 255
 Graf, G. 102n101, 114
 Grafton, A. 398n37, 401
 Greer, R.A. 352n39, 359
 Gregorius Magnus 103, 103n104, 111
 Gregorius Nazianzenus 55, 55n11, 59, 127, 197, 218, 259n24, 312, 384n27, 384n28, 384n29, 385n30, 394, 398, 469, 474, 474n37, 475, 499n7
 Gregorius Nyssenus *passim*
 Gregorius Palamas 98, 470n18, 484
 Gregorius Thaumaturgus 283n118
 Grélier, H. 314n15, 339
 Grieser, H. 312n1, 338
- Grigor Narekatsi 101, 101n95, 117
 Grillmeier, A. 208n56, 230, 247, 247n61, 255
 Griswold, Ch.L. 272n65, 286
 Guérard, M.-G. 91, 91n55, 94, 94n67, 114
 Guillelmus de Sancto Theodorico 103, 103n105, 113, 157, 399n42, 401
 Guinot, J.-N. 95, 95n70, 114
 Guthrie, W.K.C. 272n60, 286
 Gutiérrez, D. 395n22, 402
- Haas, A.M. 411n36, 415
 Hadot, P. 157n7, 168, 267n16, 271n57, 286
 Haikka, T. 93n65, 114
 Hainthaler, Th. 267n17, 286
 Halfwassen, J. 385n31, 385n33, 385n34, 389
 Hall, S.G. 160n17, 169, 298n48, 298n49, 298n50, 299n51, 299n52, 310
 Halliwell, S. 304n77, 310
 Hankinson, R.J. 473, 473n36, 474n42, 477n51, 477n53, 483
 Harl, M. 54n6, 63n69, 75 f., 78n6, 80, 80n11, 112, 114, 120n5, 135, 181n10, 192n85, 197 f., 202n11, 205n31, 229 f., 521n16, 526
 Härle, W. 388n49
 Harlfinger, D. 77*, 86n35, 113, 117
 Harnack, A. von 234, 234n6, 254 f.
 Harris, R. 273n68, 286
 Harrison, V.E.F. 308, 308n93, 310 f., 368n36, 374
 Heath, M. 494n59, 496
 Heidegger, M. 416, 416n3, 427
 Heil, G. 366n28, 374
 Heine, R.E. 54n6, 73n130, 76, 194n92, 198, 416n1, 427
 Heisenberg, H. 80n11, 114
 Helladios 126
 Helm, J.J. 521n17, 526
 Heraclidas Nyssenus 124 f.
 Hermogenes Tarsensis 511, 512n23, 516
 Herrmann, W. 233, 233n1, 234 f., 235n9, 253, 255
 Hervet, G. 106 f., 107n124
 Heyhoe, J. 340*
 Hicks, R.D. 280
 Hieronymus 142, 142n33, 156
 Hierosolyma 8, 18, 101n97, 125, 215, 411, 462 f., 487n12

- Hierotheus 336–338
 Himes, M.J. 172n2, 179
 Hippolytus 65n77, 138, 144
 Homerus 291n14, 292n19, 292n22, 294, 297, 298n43, 311, 492n46, 496 f.
 Honnefelder, L. 164n31, 168
 Höschel, D. 108, 108n127, 108n129, 115
 Hübner, R.M. 192n85, 198, 234n7, 254 f., 254n92, 547n58, 548
 Hugedé, N. 272n61, 272n62, 277n92, 278n96, 286
 Hunger, H. 77*, 113

 Ignatius 338
 Innes, D. 304n77, 305n78, 305n80, 305n81, 305n82, 305n83, 305n84
 Inwood, B. 473n36, 483
 Ioannes Picus Mirandula 104n109, 114, 391, 397–399, 397n34, 398n37, 398n38, 398n39, 399n43, 399n44, 401 f.
 Iohannes Chrysostomus 55 f., 89n48, 97 f., 107n125, 108n127, 117, 127, 312
 Iohannes Damascenus 222n126
 Iovinianus 73, 73n133
 Ippolitus romanus 78
 Irenaeus 238–240, 238n15, 238n19, 240n22, 240n23, 254 f., 390, 487n12
 Ishodad de Merv 100
 Isidorus Hispalensis 156
 Isocrates 306, 306n88, 306n89
 Iustinus Martyr 390
 Ivánka, E. von 411n36, 415, 431n19, 442
 Izmir 86

 Jackson, D.F. 108n129, 114
 Jacobsen, A.-C. 168n44, 169, 313n9, 339
 Jaeger, W. 119 f., 119n3, 125, 131, 133, 136, 404n7, 409n29, 415
 Jeaneau, E. 103n105, 114
 Jeffreys, E. 79n6, 97n76, 97n77, 98, 98n84, 114
 Jeffreys, M. 97n76, 97n77, 114
 Jenkyns, R. 290–292, 290n12, 292n17, 292n19, 293n23, 298n47, 302, 302n68, 307, 311
 Johansson, M. 511n22, 516

 Kaczmarek, S. 323n69, 339
 Kairouan 85

 Kämmel, H. 108n127, 114
 Kannengiesser, C. 193n88, 197
 Kant, I. 167
 Kapriev, G. 386n39, 389
 Karamanolis, G. 160n17, 168
 Karfiková, L. 193n86, 198, 265, 265n3, 286, 361n6, 501n16, 507
 Karo, G. 91
 Keck, L. 236n13, 237n14, 255
 Kees, R.J. 470n20, 483
 Kelly, J.N.D. 208n56, 222n123, 230
 Kibre, P. 397n34, 402
 Kiknadze, G. 101, 101n99, 115
 King, J.C. 334n156, 338
 Kinzig, W. 309n96, 311
 Klock, C. 186n43, 187n49, 198, 204n18, 210n69, 231, 306n90, 311, 426n25, 428
 Klostermann, E. 121n7, 130n29, 131n30, 133, 135
 Kobusch, T. 78n6, 116, 155n1, 156n3, 157n5, 157n7, 158n10, 160n17, 164n31, 166n38, 166n40, 167n43, 168 f., 168n44
 Kochlamazashvili, E. 101n98, 113
 Kokkinobaphos, J. de 96, 96n75, 98, 108 f., 115
 Kollwitz, J. 121, 121n8, 136
 Konstantinou, E.G. 543n27, 548
 Koschorke, K. 238n16, 255
 Kouroupou, M. 86n35, 115
 Kouymjian, D. 100n93, 117
 Krause, M. 238n16, 255
 Kremos, G.P. 97n79, 115
 Kristeller, P.O. 106n120, 111, 396n29, 397n31, 401
 Kroeger, M. 121n7, 130n29, 131n30, 133, 135
 Kühneweg, U. 79n6, 116

 Ladner, G.B. 390, 390n1, 402
 Laga, C. 97, 97n78, 115
 Laird, M. 63n69, 69n103, 76, 81n13, 115, 170, 171n1, 172n2, 172n4, 179, 181n9, 198, 214n91, 230, 308n95, 311, 343n7, 359, 361n4, 364, 364n15, 365n19, 374, 427, 427n26, 433n30, 442, 470n16, 471n24, 483, 541n12, 543n27, 543n28, 547n59, 548 f.
 Lamberton, R. 492n46, 496
 Lamberz, E. 103n103, 115

- Lamm, J.A. 313n11, 338
 Lampe, G.W.H. 277n89, 286
 Langerbeck, H. 58n26, 60n40, 61n48, 77,
 77*, 80, 83–91, 83n25, 84n26, 85n29,
 87n36, 88n41, 88n44, 90n49, 90n50,
 91n56, 93, 93n62, 93n63, 97, 99, 99n85,
 101, 105n114, 107, 107n126, 110, 115, 133,
 161n18, 227, 230, 256n2, 279n102, 288n2,
 311, 306n3, 374, 380n6, 409n29, 477,
 489n22
 Lawson, J. 293n27, 311
 Ledegang-Keegstra, E. 105n118, 115
 Leemans, J. 81n15, 112, 200n2, 232, 247n62,
 255, 316n20, 339, 361n6, 380n7, 388,
 437n47, 441f., 468n6, 479n59, 481n71,
 482f.
 Lehmann, H. 100n93, 117
 Leibniz, G.W. von 167
 Lenk, L. 108n127, 115
 Leo III 122
 Leonardi, C. 104n109, 104n110, 114
 Leonhardt, J. 236n12, 255
 Leuenberger-Wenger, S. 542n23, 549
 Lévy, A. 508, 508n1, 510, 516
 Lewy, H. 40n45, 52, 69n107, 76, 269n32,
 286
 Leys, R. 438n52, 442, 491n35, 496
 Libanius 420n12, 511, 511n22, 516
 Liddell, H.G. 277n89, 286, 304n76, 420
 Lieske, A. 432n23, 442
 Lietzmann, I. 91
 Limone, V. 4n3, 52
 Linardou, K. 96n75, 97n81, 115
 Lloyd, A.C. 475n44, 483
 Locke, J. 160
 Long, A.A. 477n54, 483
 Louth, A. 186n40, 187n46, 193n88, 194n88,
 198, 403n1, 406n16, 407n21, 415, 469n12,
 483
 Löwenklau, J. 106–108, 106n121, 116
 Lozza, G. 316n23, 316n24, 317n30, 321n53
 Lucà, S. 84n27, 84n28, 85n30, 94n67, 115
 Lucchesi, E. 100n92, 116
 Luciola Campi, M. 99n86, 116
 Ludlow, M. 60n41, 208n56, 231, 361n4, 374,
 416n1, 427
 Ludz, U. 416n3, 427
 Lunanus/Lucianus Xama 87
 Luther, M. 551, 551n1, 552, 553n2
 Macarius (Ps. Macarius, Macarius/Symeon)
 119–121, 120n6, 121n7, 123–125, 124n12,
 130–136, 130n29, 132n31, 135n38, 404n7,
 415, 508, 510f., 510n17, 511n20, 511n21,
 516
 Macé, C. 91n52, 97n77, 112, 114
 Machetta, J.M. 397n33, 401
 Macleod, C.W. 486n4, 486n6, 496
 MacMullen, R. 55, 55n10, 56, 76
 Macrina 55, 244, 265n3, 268n26, 286f.,
 319f., 331, 369, 397, 429, 429n3, 434–
 443, 452n31, 518, 522, 526
 Mai, A. 103n106, 115
 Maillard, J.-F. 106n122, 116
 Malaxos, M. 88f., 88n44, 113
 Malherbe, A.J. 257n12, 258n22, 264
 Mali F. 267n17, 286
 Manetti, G. 396
 Mango, C. 122, 122n9, 136
 Mann, F. 180n6, 182n17, 183n22, 198, 469n14,
 483, 518n3, 526, 531n22, 538
 Maraval, P. 54n6, 76, 201n3, 231, 243n39,
 255, 298n43, 429n3, 436n42, 436n43,
 441n66, 442
 Marcella 277
 Margounios, M. 108
 Marotta, E. 439n56, 442
 Marsili, L. 395
 Marsilius Feghinensis 104n109, 114, 396n7,
 397
 Mason, A. 511n20, 511n21, 516
 Maspero, G. 3, 47n71, 52, 54n6, 61n53, 76,
 193n86, 202n9, 211n77, 214n89, 217n103,
 223n128, 224n132, 229, 231f., 242n38,
 243n39, 255, 268n23, 286, 332n140,
 340*, 342n5, 357n54, 359, 361n4, 371,
 372n49, 433n31, 442, 444n1, 453, 454n1,
 465, 469n8, 483, 505n38, 510n17, 516,
 528n4, 528n5, 528n6, 531n22, 538,
 540n6, 545n49, 549
 Mateo-Seco, L.F. 54n6, 76, 187n49, 198,
 200n1, 201n7, 202n9, 203n17, 204n18,
 208n58, 209n67, 212n84, 214n88,
 216n99, 216n100, 217n104, 219n115,
 221, 221n118, 221n119, 222n122, 222n123,
 223n127, 224n133, 227n141, 227n142,
 227n144, 229, 231f., 242n38, 243n39,
 255, 268n23, 286, 342n5, 354n46,
 357n54, 359, 433n31, 442, 444n1, 453,

- 454n1, 465, 510n17, 516, 528n4, 528n5,
531n22, 538, 540n6, 541n17, 545n44,
545n49, 549
- Mathew, G. 510, 510n16, 516
- Maximus Confessor 91, 348n24, 359
- Maximus Margounios 108
- Maximus Tyrius 521n18
- May, G. 54n6, 57n18, 76, 129, 129n26, 136
- Mazarin, J.R. 86
- McCambley, C. 173n6, 179, 210n68, 222n124,
231
- McGuckin, J.A. 312n1, 469n15, 476n48, 483
- McWhirter, J. 485n1, 496
- Meis, A. 79n6, 116
- Meissner, H.M. 441n67, 442
- Melikishvili, N. 101n99, 115
- Meloni, P. 94n66, 103n104, 116
- Meredith, A. 72, 72n122, 76, 78n6, 116,
186n43, 198, 201n4, 224n129, 224n130,
231, 434n33, 442, 514n30, 516
- Méridier, L. 288n4, 289n4, 289n6, 311
- Merki, H. 476n48, 483
- Mesopotamia 123, 127 f., 130
- Methodius 390
- Metzler, D. 106n121, 116
- Meursius, J. 103n106
- Michel, A. 223n127, 231
- Miller, P.J.W. 398n39, 402
- Mingana, A. 273n68, 286
- Mira, M. 510n17, 516
- Mirinhos, J.F. 386n39, 389
- Mojsisch, B. 78n6, 116
- Molhuysen, P.C. 105n15, 116
- Momigliano, A. 438n53, 443
- Montet, D. 276n88, 285
- Moore, P. 95, 95n73, 116
- Morel, C. 107
- Moreschini, C. 4n3, 5n7, 52, 53, 55n9, 76,
142n31, 154
- Morlet, S. 79, 79n10, 80, 85n32, 112, 116
- Mortley, R. 501n16, 507
- Mosshammer, A. 58, 58n30, 63n71, 68,
68n97, 71n114, 76, 187n46, 198, 210n69,
231, 380n7, 389 f., 390n1, 402, 407n18,
410n34, 415
- Moutsoulas, E.D. 48n75, 52, 200n1, 201n5,
202n9, 217, 217n102, 231, 438n51, 443,
468n8, 483
- Mühlenberg, E. 161n18, 169, 183n19, 185n38,
186n40, 192n86, 193, 193n88, 194n94,
195n95, 198, 203n13, 231, 234n8,
235n8, 255, 331n133, 338, 425n21,
427
- Müller, F. 372n49, 375
- Müller, J. 474
- Muradjan, K.M. 101n96, 116
- Museus 41n50
- Musurillo, H. 35n28, 52, 201n8, 210n68,
216n95, 230
- Myrokephalites, M. 105n114
- Nadal Cañellas, J. 90n49, 116
- Nasta, M. 336n177, 338
- Naucratus 434
- Nausicaa 293
- Nemesius Emesenus 394
- Neophytus Inclutus 96
- Neuschäfer, B. 79n7, 116
- Nicaea 372n50, 374, 470n18, 482
- Niccoli, N. 78n5, 104, 104n108, 104n109, 114,
118, 395–396
- Nicklas, T. 55n9, 76
- Nicolaus Cusanus 397, 397n33, 401
- Nicollier, B. 106n118, 111
- Nicomedia 126 f.
- Niehoff, M. 492n46, 497
- Nikolopoulos, P.G. 97, 97n80, 99n88, 116
- Nilus Ancyranus 91, 91n55, 92, 94, 94n67,
114 f., 117
- Nissinen, M. 485n1, 497
- Norden, E. 309n98, 311
- Norris, R.A. 173n6, 179, 206n46, 210n68,
211n73, 220n116, 231, 256n2, 257n8,
257n14, 261n42, 261n49, 264, 288n2,
300n54, 300n60, 311, 315n18, 344,
349n31, 361n3, 365n23, 374, 391n4, 402,
404n7, 415, 454n2, 465, 467n4, 479n63,
481n73, 483, 499n8, 504, 504n36, 507,
509n5, 539n2, 549
- Nymphaion 86
- Oberdorfer, B. 388n49
- Ocáriz, F. 223n127, 232
- Ohly, F. 94n66, 116
- Ojell, A. 218n109, 232
- Olivi, P.J. 156
- Olivier, F. 107
- Olympias 4, 29, 54, 56, 312, 312n1

- Oratius 293, 293n25, 293n26, 295
 Origenes 4n3, 6, 31, 33, 41n50, 46 f., 46n68,
 51n79, 52, 56, 60 f., 60n45, 61n48,
 65n77, 67n94, 69, 69n104, 73 f., 73n135,
 76–80, 82 f., 92, 103n104, 109, 111, 113,
 116, 133 f., 137 f., 138n5, 141n30, 142–
 146, 149, 151 f., 154–157, 162, 162n23,
 164, 164n32, 164n33, 167–169, 202,
 206n42, 206n46, 207, 207n49, 210n70,
 211, 211n74, 222n126, 223n127, 229 f.,
 239–242, 247 f., 253–255, 263, 263n61,
 266n14, 267, 267n16, 267n17, 269 f.,
 269n34, 269n38, 269n43, 286–288,
 297, 312–339, 390 f., 391n5, 392,
 392n8, 394 f., 398, 401, 404n7, 406n16,
 414n52, 416, 416n1, 423, 427, 431,
 431n18, 433, 467 f., 481, 485n2, 486n4,
 486n6, 496–498, 498n6, 500n10,
 503n30, 504n33, 504n36, 521n16,
 526, 540, 540n4, 542n22, 545n43,
 547 f.
 Outtier, B. 77*
 Pachecol, M.C. 386n39, 389
 Palladius 312, 312n2, 312n7
 Pan 291, 291n14, 291n15
 Panagopoulos, G.D. 372n49, 374, 476n46,
 477n52, 478n59, 483
 Panczová, H. 487n8, 493n57, 495n68, 497
 Pannenberg, W. 223n126, 232
 Parmentier, M.F.G. 100n91, 116
 Partenie, C. 424n20, 428
 Patterson, P.A. 312n3, 338
 Pausanias 269n34
 Pearson, J. 452n29, 453
 Pelletier, A.M. 4n6, 52
 Pépin, J. 272n60, 274n73, 286
 Peroli, E. 476n48, 483
 Perrone, L. 79n6, 85n32, 112 f.
 Persephone 291
 Petitmengin, P. 104n108, 117
 Petrus Sebastensis 312
 Philastrius 73, 73n132
 Philo Alexandrinus 40n46, 92, 95, 95n68,
 112, 137, 146, 149, 236, 236n12, 255,
 266n14, 269n32, 283n118, 326, 331,
 332n133, 338, 390, 419n10, 473n34,
 475n43, 482
 Philo Carpasiensis 92, 95, 95n68, 112
 Photius 122, 122n10, 124, 136, 386, 386n38,
 386n39, 389
 Pietras, H. 323n69, 339
 Placida, R. 65n77, 76, 79n6, 117, 314n16, 339
 Plass, P. 381n10, 389
 Plato 33, 41n50, 51n80, 143n38, 162, 186n40,
 198, 265, 267n16, 267n22, 269, 269n41,
 270, 270n49, 270n50, 271, 271n56, 272 f.,
 279, 279n104, 282n114, 283, 283n116,
 286, 294n32, 295n35, 295n36, 296,
 323n67, 327, 327n105, 333, 403, 403n1,
 404–406, 405n9, 409, 409n26, 409n29,
 410n34, 415 f., 416n3, 423–427, 424n19,
 424n20, 469n12, 475, 476n48, 483,
 519, 519n6, 520n11, 521, 521n18, 521n19,
 522n21, 523, 526
 Plese, Z. 320n50, 339
 Plotinus 5n7, 150, 164, 172, 205n31, 209,
 209n65, 229, 244, 265 f., 267n22,
 268n23, 269–271, 269n39, 270n48,
 271n57, 273–276, 280, 280n105, 283–
 285, 284n121, 284n122, 284n125,
 285n126, 287, 333, 398, 400n46, 401,
 415n54, 470n18, 472n28, 476n48,
 478n55, 483, 508, 510 f., 511n18, 523,
 524n29, 526
 Pochoshajew, I. 468n8, 476n48, 483
 Poliziano, A. 398, 398n36, 398n37, 401
 Pollet, G. 274n73, 287
 Polychronius 91–92, 93n61, 99, 103n106
 Pontone, M. 78n5, 104n107, 117
 Pope, S.J. 172n2, 179
 Porphyrius 268n23, 277, 277n89, 277n91,
 285n125, 434n33, 443
 Porter, S.E. 256n1, 264, 309n96, 311
 Poseidon 292
 Prato, G. 86n35, 117
 Preul, R. 388n49
 Price, A.W. 405n9, 408n25, 415
 Proclus 158, 273n72, 385n35, 523, 524n29,
 526
 Procopius Gazaeus 90–93, 93n61, 103n106
 Prosser, G.D. 124n13, 136
 Prostmeier, F.R. 160n14, 168
 Ps.-Basilius 157n7
 Ps.-Dionysius 336–338, 336n177, 336n178,
 336n180, 337n182, 337n183, 337n185,
 337n186, 337n187, 338n189, 338n190,
 366

- Ps.-Eusebius 91f., 92, 99, 103n106
 Ps.-Macarius 40n45, 51
 Psellos, M. 91f., 95f., 96n73, 116
 Pseutogkas, B. St. 96n74, 117
 Puig i Tàrrach, A. 55n9, 76
 Pygmalion 354

 Quantin, J.-L. 107n125, 108n127, 117
 Quest-Ritson, C. 290n9, 311

 Radde-Gallwitz, A. 340*, 521n14, 526
 Rahner, H. 164n32, 169, 433f., 443
 Rahner, K. 269n38, 287
 Ramelli, I. 312, 313n9, 325n83, 337n181, 339, 441n68, 443, 503n30, 507
 Rapp, C. 452n30, 453
 Reggio Calabria 84n27
 Remes, P. 476n45, 484
 Reyes Gacitúa, E. 542n22, 549
 Riestra, J.A. 223n127, 232
 Ritschl, A. 234, 234n5, 255
 Ritter, A.M. 135n38, 136, 193n87, 199, 234n8, 255, 366, 374
 Ritter, J. 157n7, 168
 Robin, L. 404n6, 415
 Rogers, E.F. 499n7, 507
 Rosen, R.M. 451n29, 453
 Rosenbaum, H.-U. 91, 91n55, 94n67, 117
 Rowe, C. 424n20, 427
 Rufinus 60n43, 78n2, 109, 142, 332, 334n157
 Russell, N. 470n15, 484, 491n35, 497
 Rutherford, J. 34n24, 51, 205n36, 229

 Saffrey, H.D. 385n35, 385n36, 397n34, 401
 Sakkelion, J. et A. 97, 97n79, 117
 Sappho 291f., 297, 301f., 305
 Sartre, J.-P. 165, 285
 Scheck, T.P. 241n36, 255
 Schmid, W. 88n44, 99n86, 117f.
 Schott, A. 107
 Schramm, U. 193n87, 199, 235n8, 255
 Schuele, A. 200n2, 230, 371n47, 374, 508n2, 515
 Schückler, W. 164n31, 168
 Schwyzer, H.-R. 209n65, 274n78, 287
 Scotus Eriugena 103n105, 395n20, 401
 Sebastokratorissa Eirène 97
 Sedley, D.N. 477n54, 483

 Sedmak, C. 244n47, 255
 Seferis, G. 411n38, 415
 Sels, L. 102n102, 117, 481n71
 Sesbouë, B. 527n1, 538
 Severus Antiochenus 100
 Sferlea, O. 81n13, 94n65, 117, 203n13, 232, 314n15, 332n133, 339
 Shea, I.M. 539n2, 546n54, 549
 Sifanus 106
 Sikorski, S. 396, 396n27, 402
 Silvas, A. 201n3, 232, 298n43, 298n44, 298n45, 298n46, 429n3, 434n33, 438n51, 443, 512n25, 513n29, 518n5, 526
 Simonetti, M. 154, 202n11, 223n127, 230, 232
 Sleeman, J.H. 274n73, 287
 Sluiter, I. 451n29, 453
 Smith, J.W. 268n26, 287, 352n39, 354n46, 359, 430n13, 443, 518n4, 520, 520n10, 521n16, 523, 523n28, 525n33, 525n34, 526
 Sorabji, R. 268n23, 268n26, 287, 475n44, 475n45, 480n65, 481n70, 484
 Sozomenus 127
 Spira, A. 3n2, 52, 58, 58n28, 76, 434n33, 438n51, 439n56, 441, 443
 Staats, R. 119n2, 120n6, 122n10, 123n11, 124n12, 126n15, 127n19, 127n22, 128n23, 129n26, 133, 134n37, 135n38, 136, 551
 Stadter, Ph.A. 104n108, 118
 Stead, C.G. 203n16, 232, 268n26, 287, 426, 426n25, 428
 Steenbuch, J. 501n15, 507
 Stinger, Ch.L. 104n107, 117, 395n22, 396n24, 402
 Stobaeus 273n67
 Stone, M.E. 100n93, 117
 Stratton, G.M. 279n102
 Stritzky, M.-B. von 190n76, 199
 Strzelczyk, G. 222n123, 232
 Suchla, B.R. 368n35, 375
 Swanson, R.N. 97n81, 115
 Sweeney, L. 195n94, 195n95, 199
 Sykoutris, I. 414n53
 Symeon Metropolita 88, 89n46, 109
 Symmachus 99
 Syreeni, K. 485n1, 497

- Tatianus 498n2
 Taylor, D.G.K. 99n86, 100, 100n89, 117
 Teodoziona 142
 Thecla 54 f., 57, 175 f.
 Themistius 293n24, 294–296, 294n28,
 294n33, 295n34, 304, 304n75, 311
 Theocritus 297
 Théodore de Bèze 105 f., 105n118, 106n118,
 111, 115
 Theodoretus 91, 91n53, 95n69, 95n70,
 95n72, 99, 99n88, 111 f., 114, 138
 Theodorus Mopsuestenus 137
 Theodosius 4, 510
 Theophilus 283n118, 312
 Thomas Aquinas 163n25, 499n7, 507
 Thomas, G. 200n2, 230, 371n47, 374, 508n2,
 515
 Thompson, R.W. 101n95, 118
 Thompson, S. 486n5, 487n7, 497
 Thümmel, H.-G. 122, 122n9, 136
 Tixeront, J. 200n1, 208n56, 232
 Toiviainen, S. 526
 Torrance, A. 470n18, 484
 Traversari, A. 78, 78n5, 104, 104n107,
 104n109, 114, 117 f., 395 f., 395n22,
 396n24, 402
 Trevisan, L. 396
 Trinkaus, Ch. 396n28, 402
 Tufano, C. 99n86, 118
 Tuki, R. 102, 102n100, 102n101
 Turyn, A. 86n34, 118
 Twomey, V. 195n95, 197

 Ullman, B.L. 104n108, 118
 Ullmann, W. 194n94, 199
 Ungnad, D. von 89
 Uro, R. 485n1, 497

 Van den Eynde, C. 99, 99n85, 118
 Van Deun, P. 91n52, 97n77, 112, 114
 Van Riel, G. 523 f., 523n29, 526
 Van Spitael, M.-A. 104n108, 118
 Vandenbussche, E. 222n125, 232
 Vanota 297n43
 Vereecken, J. 97n78, 115

 Verghese, P. 381n10, 389
 Viciano, A. 68n97, 76, 407n18, 415, 468n8,
 483, 518n3, 526
 Vigorelli, I. 340*, 527, 527n2, 528n7, 538
 Vinel, F. 25n10, 52, 58, 58n29, 60n2, 62,
 62n64, 62n65, 76, 101, 101n94, 118
 Vinzent, M. 314n12, 339
 Vogt, K. 434n35, 443
 Völker, W. 186n40, 189n65, 194n90, 199,
 201n9, 429n3, 430n10, 431n14, 431n18,
 431n19, 433n27, 443, 449n26, 453,
 470n18, 484
 Vries de Heekelingen, H. de 106n118, 118

 Wallis, Ch.G. 398n39, 400n45, 402
 Warren, E.W. 274n78, 287
 Webb, R. 289, 289n7, 289n8, 302, 307,
 307n92, 311
 Weedman, M. 332n133, 339
 Weiss, S. 272n58, 272n60, 274n74, 287
 Welborn, L.L. 240n23, 255, 498n2, 507
 Welsersheimb, L. 94n66, 118, 485n2, 497
 Werminghoff, A. 103n103, 118
 West, M.L. 291n14, 291n15, 292n16, 311
 Westerink, L.G. 95n71, 118, 385–387, 397n34,
 401
 Wickham, L.R. 268n26, 287
 Williams, R. 268n26, 287
 Wittung, J.A. 469n15, 483, 491n35, 496
 Wolfsdorf, D. 519n7, 521n9, 526
 Wooten, C.W. 512n23, 516

 Xia, H. 48n73, 52

 Yannaras, C. 506n50, 507
 Young, R.A. 498n3, 507

 Zachhuber, J. 200n2, 217n103, 218, 218n108,
 232 f., 234n7, 242n38, 244n47, 247n62,
 249n70, 255, 501n16, 507
 Zanolini Acciaiolini 104, 104n110
 Zeus 292, 423 f.
 Zimmermann, R. 485n1, 485n2, 497
 Zygomalas, Th. 88 f.